

EATING AND DRINKING, POWER AND IDENTITY:
A CASE STUDY OF MEAL TRASITIONS IN
BIBLICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL SOURCES

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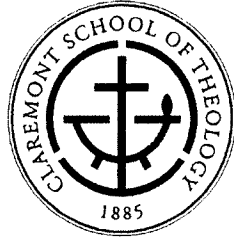
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ABSTRACT

Eating and Drinking, Power and Identity: A Case Study of Meal Traditions in Biblical and Ecclesiastical Sources

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Since Mary Douglas has developed the notion that food is a strong identity marker and breaker, food anthropologists have persuasively articulated and illustrated the role of food in the formation of identity. The goal of this dissertation is to apply this anthropological notion to various meal traditions in biblical and ecclesiastical sources to see how these meals function in establishing identities and boundaries in their respective contexts.

There are numerous meals and acts of eating and drinking in the Bible and early ecclesiastical writings. Among them, six texts or contexts that contains the topic of eating and drinking are chosen and discussed in this dissertation: Genesis 2-3 and 18:1-18, Exodus 24:1-11, Mark 6:32-44, Gal 2:11-21 and 1Cor 11:17-34, the eucharistic meal in the context of generating episcopal power, and the eucharistic meal among Christians suffering persecution at the hands of the Romans.

Close analyses of the selected literary traditions illuminate that meal traditions played a central role in defining the relations between the divine and humans and also between different groups of humans. Furthermore, it also illuminates a theme that emerges when we consider these case studies together. That theme is one of moving from a more inclusive community to a more and more narrowly defined community that excludes people through the consumption of a sacred meal.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Insights from Food Anthropology

For decades, food anthropologists have persuasively articulated and illustrated the role of food in the formation of identity, setting up the principle that food is a strong identity marker and breaker. In this regard, Mary Douglas is an appropriate starting point of the discussion, since she has argued for giving attention to the social aspects of eating and drinking beyond their nutritive and physiological values, accordingly producing prominent anthropological works on food. To be sure, before Douglas, there were other influential anthropologists such as Claude Lévy-Strauss and Roland Barthes, but in terms of impact to the field and relation to the concerned topic, Douglas remains unsurpassed. Among many works of Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus," in *Purity and Danger*, and "Deciphering a Meal" in *Implicit Meanings* are relevant to the current study.¹ In the latter, Douglas starts her inquiry with a question, "if food is a code, where is the precoded message?" and provides the following answer:

If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the

1. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), esp., 249-75. This article is reprinted in Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds., *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 36-54. The latter is a revised and expanded version of the former.

boundaries.²

In a nutshell, Douglas finds in food an implicit relation to identity. To illustrate this simple conceptualization, Douglas takes up "a particular series of social events and sees how they are coded."³ In this step, she takes up two types of food-related social events for analysis: home meal and food regulations in the Hebrew Bible. Through the decoding process of the first event, especially through the analysis of binary pairs in home meal patterns, Douglas illustrates that the patterns of home meal encode social boundaries. For example, in the social universe, sharing meals indicates higher degree of intimacy than sharing drinks, and likewise hot meals more so than cold meals.⁴ The decoding analysis of the second event reveals basically the same precoded message in the dietary regulations in Mosaic law: purity and pollution reflect the conceptual social boundaries of the society. According to her, there are rigid classifications in animals according to degrees of holiness: 'abominable,' 'fit for the table, but not for the altar,' and 'fit for the altar.' And the criteria for this classification are, "coordinated for the three spheres of land, air, and water."⁵ If an animal is featured as "living between two spheres, or having defining features of members of another sphere, or lacking defining features,"

2. Mary Douglas, "Diciphering a Meal," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997), 36.

3. Ibid., 36.

4. Ibid., 37-44.

5. Ibid., 46.

it is anomalous, and thus abominable.⁶ Contrarily, animals that show proper behavioral and morphological features are clean, and thus fit for the altar. In other words, animals that "conform fully to their class" are clean, whereas animals that "are imperfect members of their class, or whose class itself confounds the general scheme of the world" are unclean.⁷ Douglas goes on to extend the general principles behind this analysis to humans in the Old Testament, showing that the scheme of humans exactly corresponds to that of animals: Israelites who are "under the Covenant," are "fit for temple sacrifice," and "consecrated to temple service."⁸ Thus, for Douglas, the precoded message of food both in modern western society and in ancient Israel is about identity and boundary.

After Douglas, anthropologists and sociologists produced a substantial number of works, yet they are basically re-articulations, elaborations, illustrations and expansions of Douglas' fundamental thesis: food is a boundary marker/breaker.⁹ Accepting Douglas

6. Ibid., 48.

7. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 69.

8. Douglas, "Diciphering a Meal," 48-50.

9. For a brief history of food sociological-anthropological food studies and a bibliography, see Peter Scholliers, "Meals, Food Narratives, and Sentiments of Belonging in Past and Present," in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), esp., 10-12 and 19-22. Three anthologies are useful to understand the contributions of these studies: Peter Scholliers, ed., *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Counihan and Van Esterik, *Food and Culture: A Reader*; Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke H. van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet, and Culture* (London: Sage, 1992). In addition, Claude Fischler's article is interesting in that it points out, in the modern industrialized society, where agro-industry provides most of food, the identity function of food comes to be problematic; see Fischler, "Food, Self and Identity," *Social Science*

and her colleagues' themes, a few historians have entertained this relation of food and identity in their works. For example, Peter Garnsey shows that, in classical antiquity, there was a clear division between "the frugal menus of the mass of the population," and "the *haute cuisine* of the few."¹⁰ He also shows that various banquets of Greeks, "demonstrated and confirmed the membership and solidarity of the group, paraded the status of the group *vis-à-vis* outsiders, and set out the hierarchies that existed both in the society at large and within the group itself."¹¹ If Garnsey illustrates how the matters of 'what they eat' and 'with whom they eat' give a firm sense of social boundaries in a society, Effros illustrates how social boundaries are built up through such things as "under what circumstances and under whose authority the food stuffs, including the Eucharistic wine and wafer, might be consumed."¹² Effros explores the Christian endeavor in Merovingian Gaul to achieve the successful long term conversion of pagan patrons.¹³ The clerics, "repeatedly legislated against the dangers of pagan sacrifice and substituted Christian feasts in their place," and excommunicated those who did not

Information 27 (1988): 275-92.

10. Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, Key Themes in Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp., chap. 8.

11. Ibid., 128.

12. Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 4.

13. Ibid., 17.

follow church prescription.¹⁴ It is clear in this context that food (i.e., the eucharistic meal) functioned as a means of inclusion and exclusion: "The exclusion of specific individuals or groups from the communal tables of Christians enabled clerics to identify them as outsiders in a visible and meaningful manner."¹⁵ Thus, the thesis of Douglas' insightful works--the role of food as signifier, classifier and identity builder--is still influential as the basic principle in these subsequent studies.

Theme, Scope, and Order

This dissertation is an attempt to read a selection of eating and drinking traditions in the Bible and certain post-biblical sources from the perspective provided by the aforementioned anthropological conceptual principle, that is, food is an identity maker and breaker. In other words, this dissertation provides case studies that examine various examples of meal-related traditions in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and early ecclesiastical writings to show how these meals function in establishing identities and boundaries in their particular contexts. Because of the breadth of the sources analyzed, the scope of this dissertation needs to be clarified. There are numerous meals and acts of eating and drinking in the Bible and early ecclesiastical writings. They are too many to be dealt with in a dissertation. For the coherence of the dissertation, therefore, a criterion

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

to choose certain meals as the object of examination is necessary. The central meal tradition addressed in this dissertation is the Eucharist. Unlike many previous studies, however, this dissertation will not narrowly and separately discuss the eucharistic traditions in the New Testament. Rather, this dissertation expands the scope of investigation to the meals where transcendence meets immanence. This idea needs an elaboration.

Mircea Eliade in his *The Sacred and the Profane* defines the core of religion as the experience of meeting with the divine who manifests itself to us (*hierophany*).¹⁶ Unlike the non-religious person, who believes that there is no reality beyond the realm of ordinary experience limited in time and space, the religious person experiences *hierophany* in sacred space, in which cosmos emerges out of chaos, becoming the ontological center of the world (*axis mundi*), and sacred time, in which primordial divine acts are periodically re-actualized (*illud tempus*).¹⁷ Thus, in Eliade's understanding of religion, the meeting of immanence with transcendence in sacred space and time is the essence of religion. In Christianity, however, *the meeting* takes places not in any physical space and time, but in sacraments, especially in the eucharistic meal. This is the basic religious meaning of the sacraments: in them, human beings meet God; immanence experiences transcendence.

16. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 11.

17. *Ibid.*, chaps. 2-3.

Marjorie Suchocki confirms this conception in her articulation of the meaning of the sacraments:

Not abstractions of countless texts, but the living relationality of Christ, enacted now in community, is that to which the sacraments call us. The proclamation is made in the reality of bread, wine, water. We repeat the words telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as we participate in the sacraments, and the beyond-words power of the Word is conveyed in the wordless Word of bread, wine, water. God is communicated to us: God is for us, concretely, here, now.¹⁸

Among Christian sacraments, the eucharistic meal is singled out for this understanding of the sacraments. It is the blessed table of God where human beings meet God, and experience union with God. So, when Gary M. Burge, in his work on Johannine pneumatology, says, "the Eucharist was not an empty tradition, but a meeting place wherein the believer could encounter the living Christ in Spirit,"¹⁹ he points out the very essence of the meal. The eucharistic meal as the meeting place of transcendence and immanence signifies the cardinal position of the eucharistic meal in the Christian religious system. Furthermore, this understanding of the sacraments invites us to explore not just the eucharistic traditions, but also other meal traditions that have the same theological significance. If the significance of the Eucharist is that it is the place where transcendence meets immanence, other meals that are prior to the eucharistic traditions

18. Marjorie Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*, new rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 153.

19. Gary M Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), xvii.

and that have the same theological significance could be included in the discussion as conceptually analogous to the Eucharist, and thus they may shed light on the manner in which the divine presence at particular meals helps to construct religious identities.

This understanding with the aforementioned anthropological principle provides a criterion for choosing certain meals as the object of investigation. Having two anthropological ideas, namely, "food as an identity maker" and "sacrament as the meeting place of transcendence and immanence," as the warp and weft to weave the dissertation, this dissertation will first examine six meal-related traditions in the Bible. In the Hebrew Bible, Gen 18:1-15 and Exod 24:1-11 will be examined. These two texts are fine examples of the Hebrew Bible that reveal the feature of the meal as the meeting place of transcendence and immanence. The two meals in the texts are not isolated meal events: rather, they are the meal that defines a new relationship between the divine and humans in their larger literary units. They signify the relational closeness or intimacy between the divine and humanity. They also well illustrate the role of the meal as an identity maker for the people of God. In this sense, the meals in these two texts have conceptual consistency with the eucharistic traditions. In the New Testament, Mark 6:32-44, Gal 2:11-21, and 1 Cor 11:23-34 will be examined. The Markan text well represents the essence of the Eucharist. While the two examples of meal in the Hebrew Bible illustrate relational closeness between the divine and humanity, Jesus in the Markan meal demonstrates a completely new model for the relationship between the divine and humans, becoming a dining-room slave for the marginalized. This kind of

humble manifestation of the divine is a groundbreaking picture that appears neither in the Hebrew Bible nor in any other literary sources in antiquity. Furthermore, in the Markan meal, those invited to the meal are the people in the bottom tier of society. This signifies that the reality of salvation opens not to any specific kind of people, but to anyone. Thus, the traditional boundary of the people of God is broken down through the meals. The Pauline texts show Paul's struggles to keep the new Jesus tradition against contemporary dominant cultures. In Gal 2, Paul strives against the traditional Jewish boundary of God's people, while, in 1 Cor 11, Paul strives against a Hellenistic banquet tradition that endangers the principle of equality of souls exemplified in Jesus' tradition. Thus, through examining the meal traditions in the Bible with the aforementioned anthropological principles, this dissertation will explore the rich understandings of the nature of the eucharistic traditions.

After examining the biblical meal traditions, this dissertation will examine the role of the eucharistic meal in the formation of Christian identity in early Christianity, especially in two contexts. First, it will examine the role of the eucharistic meal in relation to the emergence of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy.' Using the eucharistic meal as a means to solidify the officialdom of bishop, the 'orthodox' generates the power to expel the 'heresy' from the church. As a result, the eucharist meal which is in continuity with Jesus' open table becomes the bishop's table that narrows down the boundary of Christianity with no room for grace. Second, it will examine the role of the eucharistic meal in relation to the Roman persecution. Whereas Romans build and secure their

identity through extensive socio-religious structures of the imperial cult, Christians strive to build and secure their identity through the death of martyrs. It should be noted that the death itself would have been less powerful if it were not followed by convincingly powerful stories and interpretations. The significance of the eucharistic meal in this context is that it serves in the place where the stories and interpretations are produced, repeated and circulated. In this conflict, Christian bread triumphs over emperors' meat. However, the rich traditions of the eucharistic meal are forgotten in this process: only the concept of the Eucharist as sacrifice comes to dominate.

Thus, exploring many meal traditions in the Bible and post-biblical era, this dissertation will examine various aspects of the eucharistic meal traditions in the formation of Christian identity. As food sociologist Willy Jansen shows in his article on the identity formation of Algerians in French Algeria,²⁰ food alone is not enough for the formation of identity: religion is needed. The eucharistic meal in Christian traditions is a very remarkable example of these two elements, i.e., food and religion, combining to play an essential role in the formation of identity. The eucharistic meal, which was the table of God's grace and abundance for everyone in the biblical traditions, turns out to be a poorer table, which has no room for inclusion and acceptance, in early Christianity. A transgressive table was traded for a segregative one.

20. Willy Jansen, "French Bread and Algerian Wine: Conflicting Identities in French Algeria," in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

Methodological Considerations

Two unusual features of this paper are 'interdisciplinarity' and 'macro-investigation.' In other words, rather than digging into a particular period of time, figure, text, or discipline, this work attempts to provide a broad understanding of the proposed theme, using insights from various disciplines. The hermeneutical theory of 'the history of ideas' provides the rationale for this kind of broad approach to history.²¹ The history of ideas finds compromise between 'factuality' and 'semiotics,' the dichotomy that has divided the realm of hermeneutics for many decades. For those who emphasize 'factuality,' the purpose of the discipline of history is to reconstruct the *past* as accurately as possible, whereas for those who emphasize 'semiotics' the purpose is to interpret a symbolic value of history with relevance to the *present*. For the former, historical facts are things to be 'discovered,' whereas for the latter they are things to be 'created.' Thus, there is a huge gap between these two streams of hermeneutical theories. The history of ideas, which is one of the theories that attempts to balance these two extremes, attempts to narrow this gap by tracing the history of "unit-ideas" that are embedded in the concerned system. For example, to write the history of Christianity, the history of ideas dismantles 'Christianity' into 'unit-ideas' or 'effective working ideas,' and traces them via various eras and disciplines.²² Thus, for the history of ideas, 'interdisciplinarity' and

21. Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 107.

22. Clark's work well summarizes these two tendencies in a chronological manner.

'macro-investigation' are necessary. Obviously, the history of ideas stands closer to 'factuality' than to 'semiotics.' Yet, by tracing unit-ideas that are relevant to the present, rather than indulging in pure reconstructions of the past, the history of ideas soothes the tension between the two extremes.

Strictly speaking, this dissertation does not fit the history of ideas, since it does not deal with just 'ideas,' but also 'functions.' Yet, I am indebted to the history of ideas for a few insights in this study. For example, this work does not read the eucharistic traditions with 'generic' questions such as the shape and the origin, but with the question of 'the role,' which would be equivalent to 'unit-idea' in the history of ideas. In addition, this dissertation attempts to understand how new beliefs about the eucharistic meal are introduced and diffused with old beliefs. This task of deciding how the new idea rises out of the old is the main concern of the history of ideas, as seen in Lovejoy's definition of the goal of the history of ideas: "to make clear, if possible, how conceptions dominant, or extensively prevalent, in one generation lose their hold upon men's minds and give place to others."²³

Besides the insights from the history of ideas, there are a couple of methodological considerations that are worth mentioning. To explain those, let me make a simple

Ibid.

23. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), introduction. Also see Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, 106ff.

statement first: This study will *rewrite* the history of the eucharistic meal based on related *historical sources*. In this statement, italicized parts need to be clarified methodologically. First, here, "rewrite" is used in the same way as Foucault used the term: he argued that history "should not be constructed as a repetition of what the sources 'said,' but as a discourse that 'rewrites.'"²⁴ By this, Foucault differentiates "rewriting" from "reconstruction" or "restoration," which is the goal of the historical critical methodology. "Rewriting" presupposes that the past is "not an entity that was ever there for its own sake."²⁵ The author rewrites a discourse to respond to the present interests. Second, "historical sources" poses the question of historicity: how accurate ought the texts be to be considered "historical sources"? I do not want to abandon the possibility of objectivity in historical writing too hastily, nor will I claim historical accuracy for my own writing. I need certain measures that give readers ideas about what kind of historical accuracy this dissertation is based on, and how the risk of inaccuracy can be taken. Two biblical scholars in the OT and the NT respectively provide appropriate language for this matter. Hyun Chul Kim differentiates 'historicity' from 'historicality.' According to him, historicity "implies the idea that a text has a real historical event, in the sense of a fact," whereas historicality "denotes the idea that an event may not have occurred as the text depicts and yet the text invites or compels readers to associate it with

24. Ibid., 115.

25. Ibid.

the possible setting/context of the past."²⁶ I will write this dissertation based on "historicality." This means that I will not claim to restore the accurate picture of the eucharistic meal in the early church, but I attempt to understand how the eucharistic meal could have functioned in those possible settings.

Young Suk Kim put this notion into a postcolonial perspective. According to him, there are three dimensions of interpretation that exist simultaneously:²⁷

- legitimate (that is, it can be grounded in one or another dimension of the text itself)
- plausible (that is, it can make historical or theological sense within its context)
- valid (that is, as an interpretive choice in a particular contemporary context.)

Kim goes on to argue that we have to reconsider the tendency of "accepting as legitimate only those interpretations that reflect a Western cultural point of view or an elitist European-American academic perspective," and that "any interpretation is a choice; and because any interpretation is contextual, a critical study must be open to an assessment of whether it is ethically healthy and communally sensitive."²⁸ Thus, Kim suggests

26. Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Form Criticism in Dialogue with Other Criticism," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 95. The interchangeable terms for historicity and historicality are factuality and contextuality respectively.

27. Yung Suk Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 8.

28. Ibid., 8.

"ethicality," not "historicity" as the criterion for understanding historical sources. This argument seems somewhat bold. But we know that in early Christianity, before 'doctrines' were fully developed and accepted, 'morality' was the criterion to discern the truth from falsehood.²⁹ So, Kim's daring hermeneutical principle has its roots deeply in the early Christian tradition. To be sure, this study is by no means a postcolonial work, but I do owe to Young Suk Kim's postcolonial perspective as well as Paul Kim's notion of 'historicality' the freedom and courage to interpret the historical sources in my own perspective to respond to my own context, upon which I will elaborate in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Here at the outset, however, it is important to draw attention to the main ethical theme I suggest can be read out of the examples of communal eating in the analyses to follow. In the two chapters examining meals in the Hebrew Bible, we will see a trajectory from a very broad, inclusive human community that participates in the meal, to a more narrowly defined community. This pattern repeats in the New Testament examples, beginning with Jesus' open commensality and going on to Paul's attempt to maintain Jesus' original openness. Finally, we will turn to the more exclusive nature of the Eucharistic meal that developed in response to Gnosticism and the Roman persecutions. In the conclusion, I will explain why I think this theme is important and

29. 1 Cor 6:9ff; *Did.* 11; 1 John 3:10. Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1966), 68; Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (London: Black, 1969), 182ff.

what implications it has for the modern church.

A Summary of Previous Scholarship

Until the last half of the 19th century, there had been no clear division between the realms of systematic theology and biblical studies. The division sprouted when a group of Albrecht Ritschl's pupils formed a school in Universität Göttingen, opposing their master's arbitrary use of biblical texts in the service of his theological system. Ritschl subjugated the interpretations of the Bible under support of his liberal theological thesis—the Kingdom of God could be established on the earth by the moral superiority of Christians. Protesting against this 'freedom' of their master, the young students gradually formed a school, which placed particular emphasis upon the historical understanding of religion, including the Bible and Christianity. This was the beginning of 'the History of Religions school.'³⁰ As a result, the dividing line between biblical studies and ecclesiastical studies of the early church has become ambiguous. They have shared goals, methodologies, and resources.

This interdisciplinary approach to the topic could have been a great benefit for the academy. It might have shown exemplary interdisciplinary aspects of biblical and ecclesiological scholarships. Contrary to our expectation, however, the topic of the Eucharist received unequal reception between the disciplines. While many New

30. Helmut Koester, "The History-of-Religions School, Gnosis, and Gospel of John," *Studia Theologica* 40 (1986): 115-36.

Testament scholars were deeply engaged in researching various aspects of the Eucharist, producing many monographs and articles, church historians have rarely pursued this topic. Presumably, there are two reasons for this phenomenon. First, the topics of worship, liturgy, prayer and the sacraments have been regarded as being the work of liturgical historians so that church historians in general have been disinterested with these topics. Second, Hans Lietzmann's *Mass and Lord's Supper* and Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy*,³¹ first published in 1926 and 1945 respectively, were so thoroughly done that it seemed like no other historical quest for the Eucharist was necessary. Combined with the general disinterest in this topic among non-liturgical historians, publication of the masterpieces of those two biblical and liturgical historians almost put an end of further quests for a half century thereafter.

Although Lietzmann and Dix had different emphases in their works, they shared a common ground. Both developed their theses based on historical objectivism. Historical objectivism was the first modern theory of historiography, which appeared in Germany in the nineteenth century and was immediately welcomed in America. The founder of this school was Ranke, who claimed that the goal in historical studies was to reconstruct the past "as it actually happened."³² His primary methodology was philological in its approach: "where there are no documents," he claimed, "there can be no history."³³ As

31. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2005).

32. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, 9.

33. Ibid., 10. Also see Bradshaw to see how this theory was applied in the studies

Elizabeth Clark notes, for Ranke and his disciples, doing history meant going "to the archives to find documents, the primary sources from which they could then construct an objective, factual historical narrative."³⁴ Naturally, the primary concerns of historical objectivism were origins and forms. In fact, the origins and forms of the Eucharist were what Lietzmann and Dix respectively endeavored to reconstruct.

According to Lietzmann, there were two distinguished 'types' of the Eucharist in the primitive church: one was the joyful, Jewish-Christian fellowship meal and the other, from Pauline churches, was dominated by the theme of the memorial of the death of Christ.³⁵ The former was found in the 'breaking of bread' in Acts and Jesus' table fellowship in his earthly ministry whereas the later was related to the Last Supper. The background of the former type was the messianic banquet in a Jewish milieu whereas the background of the latter was Hellenistic sacrificial concepts. Thus, Lietzmann's thesis can be summarized in a phrase: 'two origins.'

Similarly, Dix pursued to find the 'form' of the Eucharist and his conclusion can be

of liturgical history: "They were treating liturgical texts like other ancient manuscripts, comparing variant readings and trying to arrive at the original that lay beneath them all." Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

34. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, 10.

35. Hans Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

presented in a phrase, the 'four-fold shape.'³⁶ He argued that the original seven-fold Eucharist, which was identified in the Last Supper, was transformed into a four-fold shape, perhaps as early as to predate the narrations of the first three gospels and I Corinthians. This four-fold Eucharist, which followed the action schemes of (1) the offertory, (2) the prayer, (3) the fraction of bread, and (4) the communion, and which used exclusively bread and wine, became the 'Shape' of all later Eucharists with absolute unanimity. Dix trivialized the eucharistic variations that did not fit in 'The Shape' as 'abnormal' or 'peculiar' or categorized them as non-eucharistic 'agape.'

With these two prominent scholars, the historical quests for the origins of the Eucharist seemed to end. But in the second half of the twentieth century, with the emergence of the attempts to understand history and culture as semiotics, especially by French theorists, strong doubts about historical objectivism spread.³⁷ Historians began to doubt that the past could be described, "as it actually happened," and wanted to re-examine what had been claimed to be objective. It was especially true in the realm of the historical studies of antiquity. For example, M. I. Finley showed how the claim of objectivity became feeble when we understood that there were no clear distinguishing lines between myth, epic, and history in writing history in antiquity.³⁸ In ancient times,

36. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 103ff.

37. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, pp42ff.

38. M. I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), esp., 11-33.

myths and historical narratives were freely fused and interpolated with each other, and myths were frequently accepted as grounded hard fact, even functioning as a criterion in deciding the authenticity of historical narratives.³⁹

In light of this understanding, Paul F. Bradshaw well articulated the problems of the previous methodology used in the 'objective reconstruction' of the Eucharist. According to him, there were four problems in the philological methodology that was previously used and believed to have reached objectivity.⁴⁰

- Anachronism: many of the 'apostolic' documents, on which they depended for their historiography, were actually not 'apostolic' but as late as the eighth century CE.
- Practical end: liturgical texts were not written from historical interest. Most of them were produced for use in their immediate context. So, they could not be accepted as accurate reproductions of existing models, because of their lack of accuracy.
- Living literature: related to the point above, liturgical texts were under free revisions, reflecting changing historical and cultural circumstances.
- Liturgical debris: because of their conservative nature, liturgical texts contained 'liturgical debris of the past in the present layers.'

39. Ibid., 14.

40. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 3-5.

Thus, the indefatigable positions of the previous works of Leitzmann and Dix began to waver and the need of new approaches to this topic emerged.

To be sure, this kind of pessimistic view of historical objectivity is not peculiar to ecclesiological history. For example, in the studies of the Hebrew Bible, with the emergence of the 'new' form criticism, the emphasis in interpretation shifted from historical events to the final text itself, and from diachronic (thus, historical) approaches to synchronic ones.⁴¹ Unsatisfied with attempts to reconstruct the histories of events, oral traditions, and texts, Hebrew Bible scholars now care more about form (structure), genre, and intent, rather than about the quests for historical objectivity. Similar developments have been observed in New Testament scholarship. After the aforementioned departure of the New Testament studies from the doctrinal and systemic theology to setting historicity as the goal of the discipline, the Quest for the Historical Jesus with endeavors to reconstruct the histories of related texts, backgrounds, and communities became the driving force of the discipline for almost a century. During this period, many historical critical methodologies such as source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism were developed. Unfortunately, however, their products were not satisfactory and could be well presented in Bultmann's dictum, "methodologically impossible and theologically

41. Marvin A Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003). See esp., Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi's introduction and Antony F. Campbell's and Hyun Chul Paul Kim's articles.

illegitimate."⁴² New Testament scholarship is now wide open to various hermeneutical/methodological alternatives, shifting their focus from the past to the present.

Unlike the current situation in related disciplines, however, this sort of hermeneutical shift does not seem to have bloomed yet in the studies of early Christianity, at least so far as with the topic of the Eucharist. Despite rising suspicion of historical objectivity, and the consequent emergence of various hermeneutical theories, the study of the Eucharist in the history of Christianity is still lingering in the arena of historical objectivity.⁴³ For example, many scholars have occupied themselves with asking from which milieu the Eucharist comes; whether it happened on Friday or Thursday; whether it was a Passover meal or not; which words in the institution are authentic and so forth.⁴⁴ To be sure, by saying this I do not mean that the results of the previous historical studies are meaningless, or that I will not take advantage of them. In fact, the hermeneutical transition is possible and more reliable when more historical

42. W. Barnes Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus*, rev. and enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 73. This is Bultmann's conclusion of his decades-long endeavors for the Quest, but it is also well summarized all other historical researches of the New Testament scholarship. Concerning the departure of the New Testament scholarship from the historical-critical research, Ulrich Luz also provides a valuable analysis: see Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), chap. 1, "Limits of the Historical-Critical Method."

43. For the history and issues of hermeneutics, see Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*.

44. For an up-to-date summary of these discussions, see Anthony C Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 848ff.

information is available. But the problem posed when a historical inquiry of the Eucharist is done exclusively on a certain historical methodology is that it would not fully reveal the social, anthropological, political, religious, theological significances of the Eucharist in its totality. Eucharistic studies may revolve around "methodologically impossible and theologically illegitimate" matters, i.e., the reconstruction of origins and forms, if they are not liberated from the burdens of "historical objectivity." The Eucharist was not just quintessential in the worship of the early church, but also one of the main factors in the formation of Christianity. So, there are many more aspects of the Eucharist beyond its forms and origins.

In this regard, a delightful exception among historians is Andrew McGowan, who shows active dialogue with cultural and food anthropologists in writing his stupendous work *Ascetic Eucharist*.⁴⁵ He stands out in treating the Eucharist not just as a sacrament but also as food in general. So in his work, eating and drinking really matters: he asks "why" "who" eats and drinks "what" with "whom." This anthropological approach persuasively reveals the agendum of the ascetic Eucharists, that is, "the rejection of pagan society, including rejection of its food and meat, and above all refusing any participation in the cuisine of sacrifice."⁴⁶ This significant social implication of the Eucharist has never been clearly elucidated in the previous historical-liturgical studies.

45. Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

46. Ibid., 705.

As I mentioned above, however, McGowan is an exception in eucharistic studies. There are a couple of more works in this field that reflect the hermeneutical transition into their works, but the period that they cover is not early but late antiquity.⁴⁷ Most works involving the early church still address the origins and forms of the Eucharist. Even Paul F. Bradshaw, who made a major contribution right after McGowan to the studies of the Eucharist, turned back to the matters of 'origins and forms', as the title of his recent book speaks by itself.⁴⁸ But, we need to be careful in evaluating Bradshaw. Bradshaw broke from previous historical objectivism in that, ironically, he showed how the conclusions of previous historical researches were feeble, using the same historical methodology. He refutes most of Dix's theses and provides new pictures of the Eucharist in the early church, based on thorough research on the primary texts and partly on McGowan's preceding work. In other words, Bradshaw deconstructs Dix's *The Shape* in absolute uniformity and pure linear development, using the very method that Dix used.

Currently, the works of McGowan and Bradshaw are the most up-to-date in this area. And from them, the presuppositions for this work are drawn:

First, pluriformity: Dix claimed that there was one archetype of the Eucharist in the primitive church and this uniform *Shape* of the Eucharist was later developed into

47. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*.

48. Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

many forms. But McGowan and Bradshaw persuasively show that the development took the exactly opposite route: from pluformity to uniformity. McGowan shows that the eucharistic meal was celebrated with variety of different kinds of food such as salt, cheese, honey, oil and milk,⁴⁹ not just with bread and wine. Also, even in the 'bread and cup' Eucharist, there were variations according to the use of wine or water in the cup. Bradshaw goes further arguing that there were many forms of the Eucharist according to combinations of three variables:

(a) in its ritual pattern, whether bread precedes cup, or cup precedes bread, or both occur together, or even that there is no cup at all; (b) in the elements that are used, whether bread and wine, bread and water, or bread alone or with other foodstuffs; and (c) in the meanings assigned to the rite, particularly whether it is related to the sayings of Jesus about his body and blood or not.⁵⁰

These various forms and understandings of the Eucharist were later merged into one type of Eucharist in terms of form (bread-cup order), elements (bread and wine) and theology (sacrifice).

This development began from the second half of the second century, but reached its peak after the fourth century. So, in the early church there was not one table but many tables, showing a variety of different forms, origins, theologies and elements, corresponding to their locations, theological and cultural traditions, and ways of responding to their social

49. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals*, 89ff.

50. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, vii.

and religious contexts.⁵¹

Second, the liturgy combined with a meal: Dix maintained that the Eucharist became purely liturgical out of a meal context in a very early stage in its development, as early as between the writings of 1 Corinthians and the first Gospel.⁵² Bradshaw, refuting this supposition, contends that Dix's claim is not based on actual evidence, but rather comes from "the minds of modern scholars who find it impossible to imagine that early Christians might have viewed the whole meal as sacred--as 'the Eucharist.'⁵³ The literary evidence for Dix is Justin Martyr's *First Apology* 61-65 and Pliny the Younger's report about the Christian gathering.⁵⁴ Obviously there remain interpretive issues to fully understand the implications of the texts. But one thing is clear: as Bradshaw maintains, these texts do not provide definite evidence of the separation of the Eucharist from an ordinary meal. Furthermore, there is no reason that we should consider Justin and Pliny's writings as witnesses of an empire-wide phenomenon, as Dixians have supposed. The Eucharist remained a full meal longer than Dix assumed. If we accept the first presupposition above about the variety of the eucharistic meals, and if there is no definite

51. In New Testament studies, Dennis E. Smith and Hal E. Taussig show how this richness of the eucharistic traditions is embedded into the Christian meals shown in the New Testament. Dennis Edwin Smith and Hal Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

52. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 101

53. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 64.

54. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10. 96.

evidence against the fusion of an ordinary meal and a set of ritual actions in the Eucharist, there is no reason to rush into Dix's conclusions.

One piece of indirect evidence against Dix is found in the eucharistic meal in Merovingian Gaul. According to Bonnie Effros, facing challenges from pagan eating and drinking rituals, clerics in rural Gaul in the sixth and seventh centuries, being better patrons than their pagan counterparts, provided rich and abundant meals in the Eucharist to the people:

Hagiographical works testified that many saints, in imitation of the life of Jesus as recounted in the Gospels, provided the faithful with abundant nourishment from the vessels in their possession . . . Early medieval feasting in the proper context celebrated the miraculous bounty of God, and may have had connections to ancient Christian eucharist meals that included a far wider variety of foods than bread and wine, such as cheese, milk, honey, salt, fruits, vegetables, and fish.⁵⁵

The Eucharist described above is far from a purely ritualized Eucharist, and it provides evidence that a full meal Eucharist survived even as late as the sixth and seventh centuries.

Third, the need for anthropological-sociological considerations of the eucharistic meal: as mentioned above, Bradshaw's most important contribution to the studies was to deconstruct the assumed *Shape* of the Eucharist and the assumed trajectory of its linear development. After him, every traditional thought and belief about the Eucharist in the primitive church needs to be reconsidered. In the midst of this uncertainty, only one fact is outstanding: the Eucharist in the primitive church was not just a pure liturgy, but also

55. Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, 14.

an actual meal. Dix treated the Eucharist as a pure liturgy alone in the primitive church, but McGowan and Bradshaw show that that liturgy was attached to or a part of an ordinary meal, whether rudimentary or luxurious. The Eucharist was a liturgy *and* a full meal, not a pure liturgy with some token bread and wine. This is a common feature regardless of what these tables were called: the Eucharist, *Agape*, the breaking of bread or the Lord's table. From these suppositions, I make three arguments: first, the best descriptive name for the Christian religious meals in general is, not 'the Eucharist,' but 'the eucharistic meal,' which I will use in this study hereafter; second, a more legitimate area to be explored in eucharistic studies is the aspect of the eucharistic meal as a meal or food in general, not as a liturgy; third, the object of the eucharistic studies could be broadened from the Last Supper traditions to sacred--Eliade's sacred--meal traditions in general.

Chapter 2

Eating and Drinking as the Starting Mark of God's Intervention in History (Gen 18:1-8)

In the first account of the Hebrew Bible, the matter of eating was at the center, effectively expressing the relation of God with humanity. The first human couple was allowed in the privilege of eating from any of the trees in the garden, except for one. It was God's hospitality that allowed the first humans to eat and drink without their own labors. Everything needed to relieve their hunger and quench their thirst was provided by God as a generous gift. Biblical interpreters seem much more interested in the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17); yet, they frequently fail to mention the significance of God's positive command, the strong call to eat from "God's table" (Gen 2:16).⁵⁶ This hospitality of God for the first humans defined the relation between God and humanity in the garden.

God's hospitality, however, did not receive the due respect from the human side. The first human couple ate the prohibited fruit, transgressing the symbolic boundary between God and humanity drawn by the Creator. The punitive result altered the ontological status of humanity.⁵⁷ While in Eden, humans received their nourishment

56. Andrea Beth Lieber, "God Incorporated: Feasting on the Divine Presence in Ancient Judaism" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1998)., 56ff.

57. Ibid., 59.

without labor, like deities; but, after the fatal 'eating,' humans had to labor for their food. In this way, the biblical narrative separates humanity from the divine. In the very beginning of the Hebrew Bible, the matter of eating decides the relationship between God and humanity. This is the backdrop for understanding the meal in Gen 18:1-8.

As the results of the fatal eating in Gen 3, men had to labor for food and women had to labor to bring forth children. Throughout Genesis, God oversaw the "fruitfulness" of the land and the "fruitfulness" of female characters.⁵⁸ In other words, in the post-Eden era, the "fruitfulness" of the land and the bearing of children were the most important vehicles carrying the relationship between God and humans. In Gen 18, we find that these two issues of "fruitfulness" interwove to make a very special relationship of God with his chosen people. Gen 18 narrates a meal, through which Abraham and Sarah showed their hospitality to their Deity. Now, through this meal in Gen 18, God began to restore the relationship with humanity, intervening in human history. In this chapter, I will elaborate upon this meal following this order: what they ate, who ate and what was the role of the meal in the literary context.

What They Ate

When Abraham invited the three men/messengers to be his guests, he said to them that he would offer a morsel of bread. But when he actually had the chance to treat them,

58. Ibid., 60.

the food on the table was beyond general hospitality. According to the text, the food included bread (cakes), meat from a tender and good calf, curds and milk. Each of these was significant⁵⁹:

- Cakes (*ugah*) from three measures of fine (*solet*) flour (*qemach*): In ancient Israel, bread could be baked in a variety of ways. One of them was *ugah*, an unleavened round cake, which was served for the messengers in the text. It required only some flour, water and a little salt, and could be cooked on a hot flat stone that had been heated in the ashes (1 King 19:6). This bread, with a few other kinds of bread, was a staple food for ancient Israel. *Solet* (fine flour) in the text refers to finely milled flour from wheat. Later *solet* became a technical term for choice flour to be used for grain offerings to God, as seen i.e. in Exod 29:2 and Lev 2:1. From this analysis, we learn that the bread, which Sarah baked and served the messengers, was not the kind of bread that they ate everyday, but the best quality bread available at the given time. Furthermore, according to Nathan MacDonald, it has been calculated that three hours' labor with a hand mill per day was needed to produce sufficient flour for a family of five or six. From this calculation, we can assume that preparing bread for the messengers took Sarah several hours of labor. In short, bread was not a side dish to meat, but it alone was enough to express a very warm reception.

59. What follows is mainly based on Nathan MacDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat?: Diet in Biblical Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

- Meat of a bull (*ben-baqar*): Needless to say, in ancient Israel, meat was highly valued. Meat was a well-known offering for God, especially the fatty portions. For some periods of Israel's history, meat could be consumed only if it had been offered at the sanctuary. This fact illustrates how highly meat was regarded. In the wider Palestine area in general, archaeological discoveries witness that meat meant primarily one of the four domesticated animals: sheep, goat, cattle and pigs. Among these animals, *ben-baqar* (a bull from the herd) was esteemed most highly, not necessarily in the context of food-consumption, but in the context of sacrifices. Beside the present text, *ben-baqar* appears 36 times throughout the Hebrew Bible. In 35 of these instances *ben-baqar* is used in a sacrificial context for a sin offering, a burnt offering or consecration/ordination of priests.
- Milk and dairy food: The Hebrew word *chalav* means milk; but *chem'a* can mean any dairy food such as butter, cream or cheese. Many of the biblical texts associate dairy products with luxury and abundance. A famous example is the characterization of the Promised Land as flowing with milk and honey. Also in a number of accounts of hospitality, milk is one of the choice foods presented to the guests (beside the present text, Judg 4:19 and 2 Sam 17:29). Milk and dairy food, however, had never been associated with sacrifices. Meat, grain, wine and oils were all part of the regular offerings. But there was no place for milk or other dairy products, either alone or in combination with other foods. From this observation, David Kraemer in his *Jewish Eating and Identity through the Ages* defines milk and dairy food as "non-

Temple" food, as opposed to "Temple" food such as meat and grains.⁶⁰

From this brief analysis of the food with which Abraham served God's messengers, we learn that those three foods--bread, meat and dairy--imply a few significant points. First, the meal represents the *haute cuisine* of the time. According to today's criteria, those food sound just plain or even rough. But, according to the criteria of ancient Israel, all three foods were top tier. Second, the meal features a totality of food. It includes foods of both agricultural (bread) and nomadic (meat and dairy) traditions, both male (meat) and female (bread and dairy) labors, and both sacred (bread and meat) and secular (dairy) characteristics. These dualistic features of the meal highlight the role and theological implication of the meal, which I will discuss soon.

Who Ate

In the present text, the identities of the three men has been a controversial issue. In fact, in the text, it is not clear whether they were messengers of God, whether God was also present with these three men, or whether Abraham recognized who they were. In spite of this ambiguity, I argue that they were messengers of God and Abraham recognized them as such. I also argue that in the literary context, it is meaningless to separate God from His angelic servants: their presence simply represents a theophany.

Although they do not clear all ambiguities, there are textual supports for my

60. David Charles Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages*, Routledge Advances in Sociology, no. 29 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 49.

argument that their appearance is a theophany. First of all, the text itself states it. The present text begins with the statement in v1, saying, "The Lord appeared to him." Then, the narrative opens with the appearance of three men. Clearly, in this literary format, the three men appear in v2 with an introductory statement (v1) that identifies these three men with the Lord, thus introducing them as God's angelic messengers. This opinion is also supported by a sudden change of the speaker in the text. In the greater part of the present text, the third person plural (they) is used to designate the three men speaking. Suddenly, however, in v10 the text identifies the speaker with a third person masculine singular (he) and, in v13, more directly with "the Lord." In the text, we have no reason to think that the actual speaker has shifted from three men to "the Lord." What is changed is how the text addresses the "three men": from "they" to "the Lord." The shift is abrupt, and the text leaves no clue for us to solve this difficulty. Still, it is more probable that the text counts one messenger's words as God speaking directly. In sum, in the present text, God appears to Abraham in the form of three angelic messengers in a theophany.

Abraham's locus also leads us to assume that it was a theophany. V1 states that the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre (*elonei mamre*). *Elonei Mamre* had a very special meaning to Abraham. After Abraham left his native land responding to God's call, the first altar he built was at "the hill country with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east" (12:8, 13:3). There he invoked God by name. But when he separated from Lot, Abraham gave up his first altar because Lot chose that area for his dwelling place. Then Abraham came to dwell in Hebron and built his second altar at *elonei mamre* (13:18). It

is noteworthy that, after he built his first altar, he did not dwell in the area: he journeyed to Egypt. But, after he built the second altar at *elonei mamre*, he dwelt there and was known as "the Hebrew who was dwelling at *elonei mamre*" (14:13). Although he once journeyed to the region of the Negeb, he came back to *Mamre* to dwell, bought the land (his first piece of real estate) from the Hittites (Gen 23) and was buried there with Sarah after his death (Gen 25). Thus, *elonei mamre* had the strongest bond with Abraham.

More importantly, it was at *elonei mamre* where Abraham in a vision received God's promise of offspring and made a covenant with God (15). It was also at the *elonei mamre* where God appeared and promised Abraham that he would be the father of nations and Sarah would be the mother of nations (Gen 17). To be sure, on these two occasions, the locus was not clearly mentioned. However, considering that Abraham began his journey from *elonei mamre* to the region of the Negeb later in chapter 20, we do not have any reason to assume these two theophanies happened in any other place. At *elonei mamre*, Abraham had thus already twice experienced theophanies of God. At his first altar, he simply invoked God by name. But in the altar at *elonei mamre*, God appeared twice and made the promise to Abraham/Sarah and the covenant with Abraham/Sarah. Although we do not have vivid descriptions of these theophanies, we assume that now Abraham knew God's theophany and understood God's presence with him. Based on these two points above, I argue that Abraham likely recognized the identity of the "three men" immediately. That explains why Abraham ran to meet them, bowed himself to the earth, and hastened to prepare a meal to serve them.

So, who did eat? Abraham did not eat with the messengers. Only God's angelic messengers ate. And in their eating, God was served.

What was the Role of the Meal in the Literary Context

In the previous discussions, I concluded that, in the present text, Abraham served God with the *haute cuisine*. What then was the role of this meal in the larger literary context? I will discuss this matter first in the context of the Abraham tradition, and second in the context of a macro literary unit.

In the Context of the Abraham Tradition

The MT reads Gen 18 as one unit. Based on this fact, Schneider suggests reading Gen 18:1-15 not separately, but as a part of chapter 18 with its central theme expanded to chapter 22.⁶¹ This makes a significant difference for understanding the present text. When it is read as a separate unit, "hospitality" *per se* would be the best theme of the text. But, when it is read as a part of the larger unit, we must examine the role of the present text in the plot of the larger unit, that is, Gen 18-22. There are many characters appearing in this part of the divine drama: Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael. Analyzing the dynamics between these figures and God's relation with them, Schneider in her *Sarah: Mother of Nations* shows that the main purpose of Gen 18-22 is to tell us

61. Tammi J. Schneider, *Sarah: Mother of Nations* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 66ff.

how God chose Abraham/Sarah and their son, not Hagar and her son, and how God's promise (i.e., they will become the father/mother of nations) began to become a reality through the birth of Isaac.⁶² What then is the role of the meal in this literary context?

I find the answer in the plot of chapters 12-22. This section of Genesis can be divided into two parts:

- Chapters 12-17: God gives a promise to Abraham/Sarah.
- Chapters 18-22: God's promise becomes a reality.

In the first part, God gave a promise; a promise of offspring, a promise of being the father/mother of nations. But in this stage, the promise remained ambiguous. Because of their biological limits, Abraham and Sarah wondered how, when and through whom the promise would come true. In fact, God's promise seemed impossible. God's promise could come true only through God's active involvement in human history, which begins in chapter 18. In short, in chapters 12-17, God called Abraham out of his native land and gave him a promise; yet, God stayed in heaven and God's promise remained in ambiguity. Contrarily, from chapter 18 and on, God descended into concrete human history and followed through on the promise with palpable and observable actions.

A simple fact is often overlooked: this sudden change began with a meal. The meal that Abraham served to the messengers played the role of the *locus* through which God entered into human history. To borrow Mircea Eliade's definition, the meal was the *locus*

62. Ibid., 91 ff.

for "the divine manifestation to humans (*hierophany*)," and became the *axis mundi*, the ontological center of the world, in which the cosmos emerged out of chaos.

In the Context of the Larger Literary Unit

This understanding of the present text is intensified when placed within a larger literary unit. The meal in the present text links the present history with the past. In other words, the meal/food is the medium that symbolically illustrates the continuity of the past and the present. Before the transgression, the life of the first pair of humans was based on divine hospitality. God permitted them to eat from any trees in the garden, except for one. They could sustain and even enjoy their lives without their own labors. After the transgression, however, the situation changed. They were no longer allowed to access God's table. They had to labor for their food; they had to sustain their lives from the products of the ground. This shift in how/what they ate illustrated the rupturing of the relational distance between God and humans. Now, Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. This is what happened in the biblical primeval history. Then, starting in Gen 12, the Hebrew Bible relates the history of the restoration of the relationship between God and humans. God initiated the restoration: yet, it was not a complete restoration. It was rather a partial and conditional restoration with God's chosen people through a covenantal relationship. For this, God came out of the heavenly garden into the reality of human beings and began to intervene in human affairs for the chosen people. Just as food was the medium that defined the relation between God and humanity in the garden,

in the midst of human world, food again played the role of the medium that symbolically and actually established the *locus* for God's meeting with humans. Food in the garden had first been a means to reveal God's hospitality to humanity, then became a means for God's punitive action. Then, in Gen 18, food produced by human punitive labor became the means to mark the restoration of the relationship between God and humans, although partially.

Humanity's first meals, provided by God, were consumed by Adam and Eve, the parents of all people. After their transgression, the community of people invited to participate in a meal with God, symbolized in the person of Abraham, became more narrowly defined. At this point in the Biblical narrative, only those nations that descend from Abraham are called to participate. Through meals, God's favor is extended first to all humanity and then to just the descendents of Abraham. In the following chapter, we will see this community even more narrowly defined, but as we will see in the analysis of the Markan text that follows, Jesus once again redefined the community of those called to eat with God in a broad, inclusive fashion once again.

Chapter 3

Eating and Drinking as a Marker of God's Closeness to the People (Exod 24:1-11)

God's intervention in human history is not a one-time event. There are other instances in which meals are shared in the presence of God in such a way as to illustrate something about how the relationship between humanity and God is defined. In the previous chapter, we saw how God fed Adam and Eve, and therefore all people, and then how the group of people shown God's favor became limited to the descendents of Abraham. We now turn to the story of Moses in Exodus to see how a meal once again sets the stage for a redefinition and for a further limitation to the relationship between God and people, this time to the nation of Israel specifically.

In the Hebrew Bible, God, dwelling in *Shekinah*, accompanies the people of Israel throughout their sojourning in the wilderness. In spite of its significance, Exodus 24:1-11 has not received the attention due the commencement of God's dwelling among the people as marked with a meal. The eating and drinking before God of Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel becomes a turning point of both physical and relational distance between God and the people of Israel. Before this event, there was an impassible gap between God in heaven and the people on earth. After the event, however, God dwells among the people and accompanies them. A full-scale literary analysis will elucidate the theological significance of the meal.

Larger Scale Analysis

The widest scope of the current text, which shows coherence in terms of theme, is Exod 1-Num 10:10. In this unit, Moses is the common theme, which binds this range of text as one large unit. Exod 1-18 contains the story of Israel's bondage and liberation, in which Moses plays the role of the leader; Exod 19-Num 10:10 contains the story of the divine revelation to Israel, in which Moses plays the role of mediator. Although Moses continues to appear in the texts after Num 10:10, four factors make Num 10:11 a dividing point. First, the Israelites, who play a minor part in Exod 1-Num 10:10, become the protagonist in the story as much as Moses from Num 10:11. Second, from Num 10:11 the spatial setting of the text moves from the mountain or the tent of the meeting to the wilderness. Third, from Num 10:11 the plot enters a new phase, narrating the events during the pilgrimage of Israelites in the wilderness. Last, the chronological description in Num 10:11, "Now in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month," is a signal to launch a new unit. All these factors separate Exod 19-Num 10:10 from the following texts.

While a repeated linguistic pattern, "the Lord spoke to Moses, saying," (משה לאמר) binds Exod 1-Num 10 tightly as one unit, slight but critical variations divide this unit by three. The variations appear in Exod 19:3 and Lev 1:1:

Exod 19:3. "The Lord called to him [Moses] from the mountain, saying"

ויקרא אליו יהוה מן ההר לאמר

Lev 1:1. "the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting,

saying,”

ויקרא אל משה וידבר יהוה אליו מאהל מועד לאמר

The spatial references, “from the mountain” in Exod 19:3 and “from the tent of meeting” in Lev 1:1 should be noted.

Therefore, according to the locations of the events, Exod 1-Num 10 can be divided by three units: Exod 1-18, Exod 19-40, Lev 1-Num 10:10. Rolf Knierim’s analysis of the unit in a large scale is not much different from mine. So, to conclude this section, I present it as a large-scale analysis, adding my own small-scale analysis of the part to which the current text belongs (*italics are mine*).⁶³

I. From Egypt to Sinai	Exod 1-Num 10:10
A. Journey to Sinai	Exod 1-18
B. Events at Sinai	Exod 19-Num 10:10
<i>a. Revelation on the mountain</i>	<i>Exod 19-40</i>
<i>b. Revelation at the tent</i>	<i>Lev 1-Num 10:10</i>
II. From Sinai to Moab	Num 10:11-Deut 34
A. Journey to Moab	Num 10:11-36:13
B. Events in the plains of Moab	Deut 1-34

Now, with this structural analysis in a large scale, we find the literary location of Exod 19-40, where the current text belongs. The unit is located right after the story of

63. Rolf P. Knierim, "The Composition of the Pentateuch," *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1985 (SBLSP 24; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 397.

Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai, right before Israel's departure to the wilderness, in the events at Mount Sinai. The primary event that happens at Mount Sinai is the making of the covenant between Yahweh and the Israelites. Thus, the literary context of the current text Exod 24:1-11 is in the context of making the covenant. This conclusion corresponds well to what we found in the diachronic approaches.

Exodus 19-40

This literary unit is known as the Sinai Tradition, which has drawn numerous scholarly discussions. Almost all commentaries have disparate kinds of literary analysis of this passage, yet the limit of space allows me to examine only one of them. As an example of scholarly works, I will discuss Knierim's structural analysis of the unit from my point of view.

Knierim's structural analysis of this literary unit is based on the ascent-descent motif, which appears six times in the unit. For Knierim, each moment of ascent and descent serves as a dividing point. His understanding of the structure of this unit is below.⁶⁴

I. The initiation of the covenant	19:3-8a
A. Ascent for instruction	19:3-6
B. Descent for compliance	19:7-8a
II. The theophany	19:8b-19
A. Ascent for instruction	19:8b-13

64. Ibid., 400-01.

B. Descent for compliance	19:14-19
III. The confirmation of the mediator	19:20-20:20
A. Ascent for instruction	19:20-24
B. Descent for compliance	19:25-20:20
IV. The document and ratification of the covenant	20:21-24:8
A. Ascent for instruction: the document	20:21-24:2
B. Descent for compliance: ratification	20:21-24:2
V. The instruction for the tabernacle	24:9-34:3
A. Ascent for instruction	24:9-32:14
B. Descent for interference	32:15-34:3
VI. The second tablets and the compliance	34:4-39:43
A. Ascent for instruction	34:4-28
B. Descent with tablets for construction	34:29-39:43

This analysis is linguistically accurate and successfully highlights the aesthetic exquisiteness of the unit, which is a perfectly symmetrical structure. Understanding this well-balanced structure may lead us to admire the skillfulness of the Pentateuchal composer. However, this paradigm does not reflect some important aspects of the unit for the current study. First, it fails to catch the dynamics of the relationship between Yahweh and the people in connection with the covenant. In this text, progression and regression in the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites are interwoven corresponding to the progression and regression in the making of the covenant. If this dynamic is considered, each ascent and descent cannot be treated as an equally significant event. For example, in terms of the making of the covenant, the ascent in Exod 24:1 is the most significant ascent in that the covenant is accomplished right after this ascent. Likewise, the descent in Exod 15-20 is the most significant descent in that

this descent leads to the regression of the covenant. Knierim's ascent-descent analysis does not identify these differences of significance among the ascent and descent events. This shortcoming implies that, although the ascent-descent analysis is legitimate and meaningful, we need a different framework to understand the structure so that the structural analysis may reveal the dynamics of the unit.

Second, this analysis aptly presents the movement of Moses and other people in the process of making the covenant; however, this analysis overlooks the movement of Yahweh. In the explanation of his analysis, Knierim clarifies the movement of Moses and others, saying,

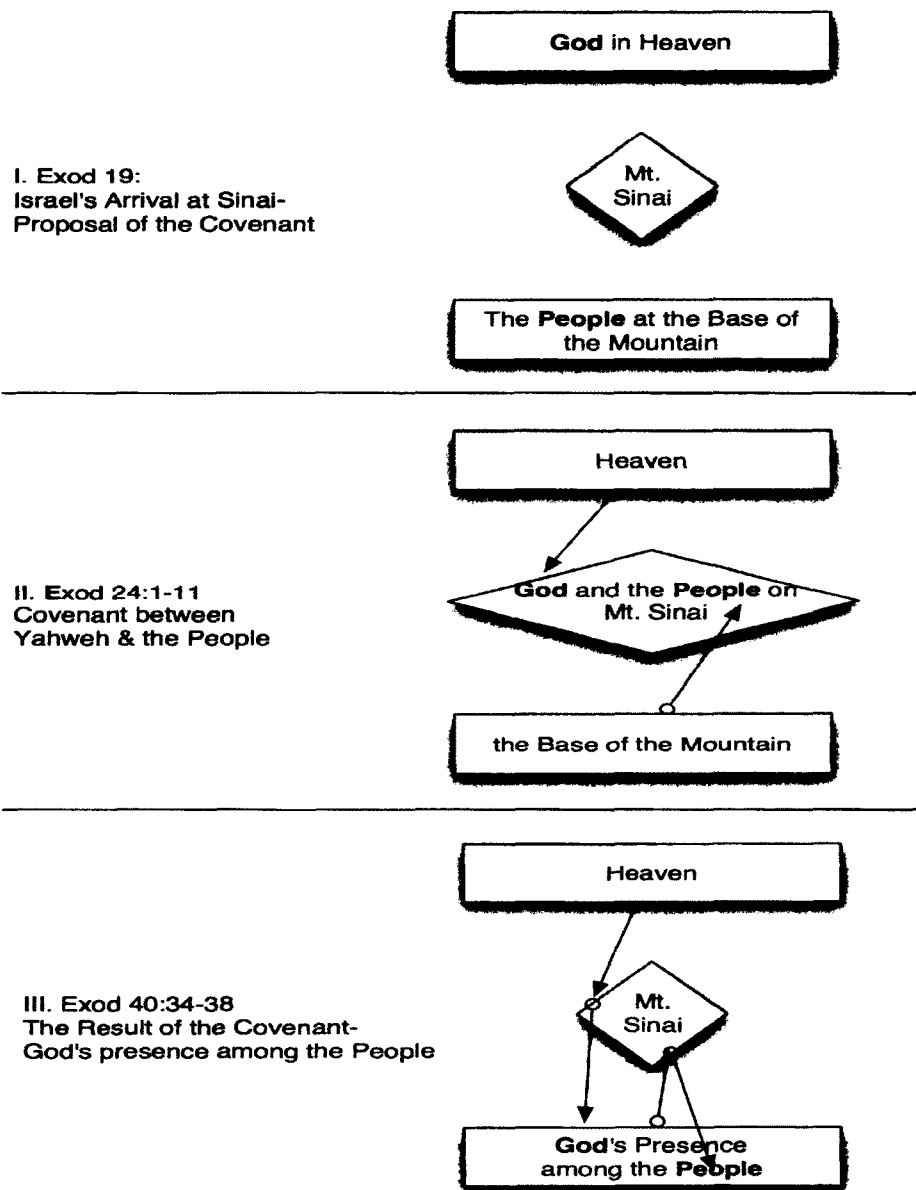
In its present composition this passage portrays a sort of hierarchical reality of localities-and times (!): seven days and forty days-in five stages: (1) camp, (2) higher level with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders; and Aaron and Hur, (3) a further higher level with Joshua, (4) another higher level with Moses alone (?) outside the cloud, (5) and the highest level with Moses, certainly alone with God, in the cloud.⁶⁵

Knierim's observation is legitimate and, with his observation of the six-fold ascent-descent cycle, he fully explains the movement of Moses and others in the unit. It is, however, not only the humans, but also Yahweh the divine, who change their localities in the process of making the covenant in the order followed. First, the permanent dwelling place of God was heaven, but He descended to the mountain and spoke to Moses (i.e., Exod 19:18). Second, temporarily dwelling on the mountain, Yahweh makes the covenant with the Israelites, allowing some of them to eat and drink before Him (Exod

65. Ibid., 401-02.

24:1-11). Last, after the tabernacle was completed, God dwells in the tabernacle among the people (Exod 40:34-38).⁶⁶ The motif of God's descent is dramatically enforced in the texts coming after the covenant ceremony of Exod 24:1-11. First, this motif is enforced by the insertion in Exod 29:14-5, in which God promises his presence among the Israelites, saying, "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God." Second, this motif is enforced by Moses' prayer for the presence of God among them, where, corresponding to this prayer, Yahweh promises, "My presence shall go [with you], and I will give you rest" (Exod 33:14). Lastly, this motif is also enforced by the concluding passage (Exod 40:34-38) that describes the actualization of the presence of God among the people after making the covenant with them. The basic direction of God's movement is downward to the earth, where He dwells among the people. In the unit, this downward direction parallels with the upward movement of the Israelites. This bi-directional transposition provides an alternative framework to understand the structure and also takes dynamics in the accounts. The diagram in the next page will illustrate my contentions.

66. The idea of God's descent is inspired by Dozeman's redactional analysis. Dozeman observes the movements of both the divine and the human in the pre-deuteronomic tradition. Then, he traces how and what the redactors D and P add up on the tradition in connection with these movements. See, Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology, and Canon in Exodus 19-24* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), esp. the diagrams in 32, 80, 125.



In above sections, I suggested the bi-directional movements of God and the people as an alternative framework to the framework of the uni-directional, the people-only movement. Another way to understand the structure of the unit is within the framework of the relational distance. This framework is not too different from the bi-directional framework, yet worth mentioning for a better understanding of the text. This is another point that the ascent-descent framework misses.

Although the theme of the physical distance dominates the text with the six-fold ascent-descent cycle, the theme of the relational distance between God and the people is also obvious. In the text, the physical distance does not always reflect the relational distance between God and the people. In other words, the ascent to the mountain (physical closeness to God) does not guarantee the relational closeness; likewise, the descent from the mountain (physical farness from God) does not necessarily signify the relational farness. In fact, these two distances seem to have no relation with each other. Rather, in the first part of the text (19-23), the relational distance appears to have its own role in the literary structure. What I observe is that, in the text, every unit that contains the ordinances commanded by God is preceded by an expression of the relational distance of farness. The motif of farness is tightly interwoven with the ordinances until the covenant event in 24:1-11. After the covenant ceremony, however, the remoteness is narrowed and changed to the closeness in 'eating and drinking before God' finally disappears. The notion of remoteness between God and the people does not reappear even in the occasion of Israel's digression, where any fearful factor of God, a symbol of

the remoteness, would be expected. In fact, instead of the remoteness, the proximity remains present in the occasion, when “everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp” (Exod 33:7). The concluding part in Exod 40:34-38, where the Kabod Yahweh appears, supports this observation. Unlike the Kabod Yahweh in previous chapter in 19:16-25, there is no sense of fearfulness in 40:34-38. Rather, Yahweh in His glory now guides and accompanies Israel. Thus, at the event of the Sinai covenant in 24:1-11, the relational distance between God and the people is completely changed. Below is my analysis of 19-40 according to this framework.

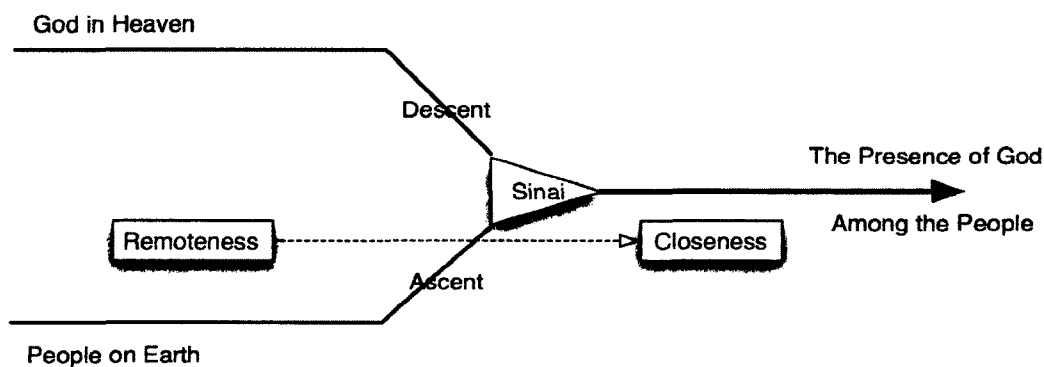
<My Analysis of the Structure of Exod 19-40 according to the Relational Distance>

I. Before the Covenant	19-23
A. Introduction: The initiation and acceptance of the covenant	19:1-8a
B. Distance of remoteness I	19:8b-25
B' Decalogue: ordinances I	20:1-17
C. Distance of remoteness II	20:18-21
C' Ordinances II	20:22-23:33
a. concerning worship	20:22-26
b. concerning relationships	21-23
1. among the people	21:1-23:13

2. between God and Israel	23:14-19
3. between Israel and nations	23:20-33
II. The Making of the Covenant	24:1-11
A. Distance of remoteness III	24:1-2
B. The Covenant rite	24:3-8
C. Eating and drinking before God: distance of closeness I	24:9-11
III. After the Covenant	24:12-40:38
A. Introduction: setting for reception of the ordinances	24:12-18
B. The Ordinances of tabernacle to actualize the covenant	25-31
C. Excursion of the people	32-33
B' The Ordinances of tabernacles to actualize the covenant	34-39:31
D. Completion of the ordinances	39:32-40:33 ⁶⁷
E. The Presence of God among the people: distance of closeness II	40:34-38.

67. Seven-fold (eight-fold, if v.16 included) repetition of "just as the LORD had commanded Moses" (vv. 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32) clearly shows that this unit is about the completion of the ordinances.

Before proceeding, I will present a visual summary of what I discussed in this section.



Exodus 24:1-11

Now I will narrow my attention to the current text, Exod 24:1-11. By combining the two frameworks that I suggested above, that is, ‘the physical movements of both Yahweh and the people’ and ‘the relational distance,’ we can clearly recognize the literary location and the function of the current text Exod 24:1-11 in the larger literary context. As discussed and shown in the previous chapter, Exod 24:1-11 functions as a turning point in the relation between God and the people within its literary context in that the relationship between God and the people is dramatically changed. Before the covenant events on the Mount Sinai, Yahweh was in heaven, far away from the people, as a feared outsider, who was too awful to be close for the humans; after the events narrated here, however, Yahweh descends to the people, becoming, to some extent, an

intimate insider before whom they eat and drink, and with whom they proceed on their journey.

Keeping this function of the unit in mind, I will examine the structure of Exod 24:1-11. I begin my analysis by defining the boundaries of this textual unit which I regard as a unified literary unit. This idea is not unanimous among scholars,⁶⁸ and so needs elaboration. The immediate evidence supporting this division is the formulaic language, “the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,” (ידבר יהוה אל משה לאמר), which marks the beginning of each unit in the larger unit, Exod 1-Num 10:10.⁶⁹ The fact that Exod 24:1 begins with “וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה” and 24:12 with “וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה” indicates that Exod 24:1-11 is a unified literary unit. With this formulaic language, the linguistic structure of the text also supports this division. Exod 24:1 and 12 begin with the Waw conjunction that usually implies the beginning of a new story. Between these two verses, the Waw conversive appears repeatedly, implying that the current story is being continued. In v. 1 and 2, Waws in conjunction form appear but they are indeed Waws in the converted Perfect, which is used to express that the Imperative in v.1 is being continued. In addition, the subject of the text is Moses, until the subject is changed to Yahweh in v.12. These linguistic evidences confirm that Exod 24:1-11 is a unified unit.

68. As seen in Knierim, "The Composition of the Pentateuch", 400-01.

69. Regarding the formulaic language, see Marvin Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 69-70.

John W. Hilber has also successfully shown the unified structure of this unit, arguing that neither vv.1-2 nor vv.9-11 can be separated from the unit.⁷⁰ S. G. Vincent's structural analysis of the text, which Hilber heavily depends on for his arguments, is also quite useful for my work. Below is Vincent's division of this passage:

A Moses and elders instructed to ascend and worship (vv1-2)

B Words of the Lord/ affirmation of the people (v.3)

C Words written by Moses (v4a)

D Sacrifices and blood ceremony (vv4b-6)

C' Words (book) read by Moses (v7a)

B' Words of the Lord/ affirmation of the people (vv7b-8)

A' Moses and elders ascend and worship (vv9-11)⁷¹

This rite establishes the covenant between God and the people. C and C' show Moses' position as the mediator of God and the people. B and B' indicate the parties who are entering in the covenant relationship. A is the proposal and A' is the result of the covenant. The acceptance of the proposal results in the new relationship between the two parties.

This analysis shows that the theme of the covenant is at the center of Exod

70. John W. Hilber, "Theology of Worship in Exodus 24," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 177-89.

71. S. G. Vincent, "Exegesis of Exodus 24:1-11" (unpublished paper, 1984) 4-5. Cited in Hilber, "Theology of Worship in Exodus 24."

24:1-11. This means that the theme of the covenant is also at the center of the entire Sinai Tradition, since Exod 24:1-11 consists of the central part of the Sinai Tradition as shown above.

Common Themes Between Exod 24:1-11 and the Eucharistic Ideas

The meal tradition in Exod 24:1-11 became a significant theological background to the most prominent Christian meal, i.e., the Eucharist, showing a couple of common ideas. Discussing them will point out the connection between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament via the issue of eating and drinking.

One of theological themes of the Eucharist is the concept of union with the divine by partaking in eating and drinking. Many scholars who are involved in historical approaches to the Eucharist suppose that this concept does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, the gap between the divine and the human in the Hebrew Bible is so enormous that the human reaction to seeing God is pure fear that they will die (Exod 19:12, 21). This sense of remoteness between the divine and the human can be found, for example, in Deut 5:5, where Israel was “afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain,” and 1Kgs 19:13, where Elijah “pulled his cloak over his face” in the presence of God. The image of Exodus 24:1-11, however, is far from this general notion in the Hebrew Bible. The description of such closeness between the divine and the human—that humans eat and drink before the divine without any fatal results—never appear in the Hebrew Bible, except here.

Another theme that this text has in common with the Eucharist is that of the covenant. As “eating and drinking” in the Eucharist is related to the covenant,⁷² the meal in Exod 24:1-11 is associated with the covenant. In fact, this immediately reminds one of the Eucharist, since the association of the covenant or the covenantal relationship with a meal is a frequently appearing motif in the Hebrew Bible. A meal serves as the occasion for establishing a new level of relationship, as seen in such cases of Isaac and Abimelech in Gen 26:30-31, Jacob and Laban in Gen 31:44-54 and more. Two of such cases, Exod 18:12 and Gen 14:18, are especially worthy of juxtaposition with Exod 24:1-11 in that they take place in cultic settings like the current text. In Exod 18:12, there is an account of the coming of Jethro into the camp of the Israelites. Jethro assumed that Yahweh was his God and to Yahweh he offered burnt offerings and sacrifices. Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to him to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. In Gen 14:18, Abraham was initiated into the cult of Melchizedek, and the ceremony was marked by a meal.

With this commonness of the covenantal meal, the association of the covenant and the meal in Exod 24:1-11 is unique as well. Unlike many other covenant meals in the Hebrew Bible and the neighboring culture,⁷³ the meal in the current text does not

72. For example, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" in Luke 22:20.

73. For the covenant meal in the Ugarit Texts, see J. B. Lloyd, "The Banquet Theme in Ugaritic Narrative," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 22 (1991): 169-93.

constitute the establishment of the covenant. Rather, it is a result of the covenant. In the text, sacrifices and blood, not the meal, make the covenant. The meal is the subsequent celebration. This “sacrifice-celebration” formula is distinctive in the Hebrew Bible, appearing only here in the entire Hebrew Bible, while it is similar to the Eucharist in the New Testament.

Concluding this chapter, there are two important things worth noting here. First, this meal signifies a tighter relationship between God and humanity, or at least to Israel. As presented in the text at least, it tells us who is included and who is not included and just what it means to be part of God’s chosen people. It is, however, a very narrowly defined concept of God’s people, and one that shows how far humanity had come from its initial meal in the Garden of Eden when all were included through the symbolic figures of Adam and Eve. We now turn to the feeding of the 5000 in Mark 6 to see how Jesus once again expanded the boundaries of God’s people to be inclusive of all.

Chapter 4

Eating and Drinking as the Core of Jesus Movement that Breaks the Boundary between "Sacred" and "Unclean" (Mark 6:32-44)

Turning now from the Hebrew Bible texts to a selection from the New Testament and to the early history of Christianity, we see how this pattern of more narrowly defining the community of those included in eating meals was repeated in the Christian community. At this point, we also move from a less historically secure set of texts to texts that are more historically reliable, although certainly not without their problems when used as reliable historical documents. In my analysis of these texts, I will point to the values and practices that are suggested by these texts and am not making hard and fast claims as to their historical reliability as direct reports of actual events. That said, these values clearly point to a trend in moving from an open and inclusive table to a closed and exclusive Eucharistic meal.

In his *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, John Dominic Crossan views Jesus' "open commensality" as an essential part of his program, and that post-Easter it was carried on by Jesus' disciples as part of their mission to continue proclaiming their master's message and to form new Christian communities.⁷⁴ In fact, about a decade earlier than Crossan, Willi Marxsen proposed basically the same

74. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 338-44.

scenario as Crossan's: pointing to the evolution from Jesus' table fellowship to the eucharistic meal in the primitive church. Marxsen's hypothesis can be summarized in three stages⁷⁵:

1. Jesus had frequent table fellowship with those who were perceived as "unclean," exemplifying the eschatological relationship.
2. After Easter the primitive church naturally continued to celebrate this meal as the common meal of the eschatological community.
3. This meal was theologically interpreted and ritualized in each community with the help of available concepts in each culture in which each community was rooted, i.e., Judaism and Hellenistic mystery cults.

Marxsen's explanation is persuasive and insightful. The significance of Marxsen's understanding is that it sets the meal tradition as the vehicle that ensured continuity between the "Jesus movement"⁷⁶ and the early church. The meal tradition, which was at the center of both the Jesus movement and the life of the early church, carried the core of

75. Willi Marxsen, *The Beginnings of Christology, Together with the Lord's Supper as a Christological Problem* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 72ff.

76. Here, I refer to the "Jesus movement" in the sense used by Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann. In their *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*, they suggest that we quest after the historicity of the "Jesus movement" rather than of Jesus, because it is impossible to detach Jesus from his disciples and followers. Thus, for them, the "Jesus movement" is a technical term that denotes the layer of traditions that originate either Jesus himself or the earliest followers of him. See Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 1-5.

the Jesus traditions to the early Church.⁷⁷ For example, for Marxsen, the process of interpreting the meal was a process of implicit Christological notions, which were expressed in these meals, becoming explicit. Marxsen states:

Soon the community put into words, it formulated, that which it experienced in these meals and the way it understood them. The content of these meals became explicit. We now have before us something corresponding to what has already confronted us on other occasions in the transition from an implicit to an explicit Christology.⁷⁸

Marxsen also finds in the meals of the early Christians, Jesus' eschatological perspectives were carried on and actualized:

With these meals the Jesus-tradition was continued. Since Easter they knew him to be alive; they knew him to be present at these meals. Thus the assertions implicit in these meals I should like to call "ecclesiology in action." At the meal the Christian community was actualized as the eschatological community.⁷⁹

Thus, Marxsen highlights the significance of Jesus' table fellowship, not just by placing it at the starting point of the eucharistic evolution, but also by designating it as that which carried on Jesus' traditions to the early church.

Having Marxsen's hypothesis as a basic framework for understanding the trajectory of the development of the Eucharist, we might find many related topics to be discussed for further understanding. In this chapter, however, I will limit my discussion to stage 1, namely, 'Jesus' table fellowship with those who were perceived as "unclean,"

77. Marxsen, *Beginnings of Christology*, 73.

78. Ibid., 73.

79. Ibid., 108.

showing that Jesus' eating and drinking with the "unclean" was the core of Jesus movement that formulated Christian identity in the early church. To be sure, there are a number of previous studies on this topic, but many of them focused on literary functions of the meal scenes in the literary contexts of the Gospels.⁸⁰ Few of them attempted to define the characteristics of Jesus' table fellowship in relation to the formation of Christian identity in early Christianity.

Christian identity developed out of its mother cultural milieu, Judaism.⁸¹ We know that cultural identities are not stable or static. Identities are not "fixed a priori,"⁸² but

80. Examples are: John Paul Heil, *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach*, The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, no. 52 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999); Lee Edward Klosinski, "The Meals in Mark" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1988); Arthur A Just, *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993); Jane S. Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark*, The Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 54 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Bruce Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 72 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).

81. I acknowledge that there is a new perspective on Christianity within the scope of Judaism, i.e., Sanders and Dunn's "covenantal nomism." But I still maintain the traditional view that Christianity is a new religion grown out of Judaism. For "covenantal nomism," see E. P Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: S.C.M., 1977); James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006). For a critical examination on "covenantal nomism," see Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 76ff.

82. David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 203.

gradually develop through various social/cultural interactions.⁸³ In the early stages of a new burgeoning identity, there is no clear dichotomy between "them" and "us." One has no inner-conflict about having multiple identities together. In the formative stage of a new identity, however, separation of "us" from "them" inevitably accompanies social/cultural conflicts between "us" and "them." In this chapter, I will interpret Jesus' table fellowship in the context of the conflicts between the Jesus movement and Judaism in the formation of the new identity of Christianity.

The selected text for this chapter is Mark 6:32-44, the most illustrious example for the proposed argument. My examination of this text will show that in this feeding scene, Jesus offers an idealized *symposium* for the underprivileged and serves them as a dining room slave. This understanding of the feeding scene reveals two implicit meanings of the text. First, unlike first century Judaism, the burgeoning Christian community counts the underprivileged among the people of God. Second, Jesus sets a vivid example of how to serve such lowly people in the community.

Gregory Riley's Heroic Christology as a Theological Framework to Understand Jesus' Table Fellowship

Before proceeding to the selected text, I need to describe a larger theological framework for understanding Jesus' table fellowship. Jesus' table fellowship should not be understood independently from the teaching and life of Jesus. If Jesus' table

83. Scholliers, *Food, Drink and Identity*, 15.

fellowship is investigated as independent literary units, we may reach, for example, these conclusions: through the table fellowship, Jesus showed care for outcasts; through the table fellowship, Jesus broke social boundaries. These conclusions are themselves significant, but they do not reveal the theological significance of the table fellowship, which can be glimpsed when it is examined in light of the overarching understanding of Jesus' teaching and life.

The concept that provides the best summary of Jesus' teaching and life is the heroic Christology, which is well articulated in Gregory Riley's *One Jesus Many Christs*. In a nutshell, the heroic Christology depicts Jesus as a hero who died for many.⁸⁴ One particular aspect of the heroic Christology that is central to this chapter is the concept of the open possibility of eternal life for all. Jesus' death for many, according to Riley, should be understood in the cosmic drama of the cycle of *dike-hubris-ate-nemesis-dike*.⁸⁵ But it was not just Jesus who was locked in the cosmic drama, but everyone was. Jesus' uniqueness that distinguished him from other heroes is that he promises eternal life for anyone who follows him.⁸⁶ Thus, unlike the idea of salvation in Judaism, Jesus' promise for immortality is open to everyone, regardless his/her ethnicity, social strata, etc. Riley states:

84. For details of the heroic christology, see Gregory J Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, But Many: The Truth About Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), esp., chaps. 3 and 4.

85. Ibid., 36ff.

86. Ibid., 139.

All were locked in the cosmic drama: the role of the suffering but righteous individual, of the hero, was to be lived by everyone regardless of social class . . . the poor were blessed not as objects of pity or charity but as central players in the cosmic drama. For those who would follow Jesus, this gave unprecedented value to the life of even the basest individual. The rich and powerful in real danger, for in his words, "What does it profit to gain the whole world and lose one's soul?" Now the blessed afterlife, the eternal reward for perseverance and integrity, was opened as heaven to all, especially to the poor. Humble people everywhere, who made up the vast majority of people in antiquity, heard his message and found themselves valued members of a new kind of kingdom in which quality of soul, not social position, was the measure of greatness.⁸⁷

Riley's understanding of the heroic Jesus is an excellent summary of Jesus' teaching and life, providing the ground on which I interpret Jesus' table fellowship.

This examination of Riley's heroic Christology illustrates the double status of the underprivileged in the overarching theological framework of the Gospel: the underprivileged such as the sick, the weak, the poor, and the outcast are, first, the subjects of the new eschatological community of God, and, second, the objects that are served as "central players in the cosmic drama." This understanding of the double status of the underprivileged illustrates the significance of Jesus' table fellowship; it is an enacted parable that effectually reveals these two characteristics of the underprivileged, and that demonstrates the nature of the new identity of Christianity.

Overview of "Feeding the Five Thousand"

This Markan narrative is adapted by all the other canonical Gospels, including the

87. Ibid., 29-30.

Gospel of John. It is the only miracle of Jesus attested in all four Gospels. Mark and Matthew add a similar feeding story as a doublet so that a total of six similar feeding stories exist in the Gospels. This number alone is enough to tell us the significance of the story.

Two historical layers lie under the story: one is of the historical Jesus and another is of Mark. But applying the historical critical methodology, i.e., form criticism or redaction criticism, to discern one layer from another is not necessary for the present discussion. As mentioned above, an alternative approach is to read the Gospel as one layer, reflective of the "Jesus movement."⁸⁸ Here, however, it suffices to recognize that Mark rendered Jesus' frequent eating and drinking with the *ochlos* into this feeding story, adding Mark's own interpretations. In this sense, this story is metonymic of Jesus' table-fellowship with the *ochlos*.

Each Gospel varies the Markan material, but the eucharistic verbs (λαβών, εὐλόγησεν, κατέκλασεν, and ἐδίδου in Mark v41 and parallels) are present in all four Gospels. The presence of the eucharistic verbs supports the legitimacy of Marsxen's theory discussed above. To be sure, it is not the goal of this chapter to search for or prove the continuity between Jesus' feeding/eating and the eucharistic meal. Jesus' eating and drinking with the underprivileged has its own theological significance.

Commentators have discussed the present text, but many of them missed a core

88. See n76.

aspect of the story. For example, they read the text as a story of a miracle, Jesus' compassion, Jesus' miraculous power, Jesus' caring for humans at the most fundamental level, or noted its similarity to a meeting of military patriots.⁸⁹ Ignored has been the very fact of the meal as a prominent component of the story. When it is read as a meal, rather than a miracle, that Jesus and the *ochlos* shared, the implied message of the story is made explicit. I will examine the story with three basic meal-related questions.

Who Ate?

In Mark 6:32-44, Jesus feeds the five thousand who follow him to a desolate place. The text does not specify who these five thousand are; it calls them *ochlos*, which simply means "crowd" or "mass of people." ByungMu Ahn, a Korean Minjung theologian, however, contends that *ochlos* in Mark refers to the people who "neither have such rights and duties [as citizens], nor do they receive protection from the state."⁹⁰ This specification of *ochlos* stands in contrast with the *laos*, which, according to Ahn, refers to the people who are "citizens, as members of a national society, have rights and duties to

89. M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); John R Donahue and Daniel J Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002); Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

90. Byung-Mu Ahn, *Jesus of Galilee*, (Seoul, Korea: Christian Conference of Asia, 2004), 121.

that society, which in turn provides for their safety and welfare."⁹¹ In other words, for Ahn, *ochlos* and *laos*, although having the same dictionary definition, connote opposite spheres of social status in Palestinian society: *laos* for citizens and *ochlos* for outcasts. Ahn's juxtaposition of these two words comes from an observation on the uses of these words in the LXX: *laos* is consistently used for "citizens" whereas *ochlos* is used only for "slaves," "soldiers of the employed army," and "conscripted soldiers." Interestingly, unlike other Gospels that use these two words without distinction, Mark does not use *laos* at all.⁹² Rather, Mark uses *ochlos* more than 36 times. Ahn is convinced that this bias is not because Mark did not know the word *laos*, but because Mark wanted to use *ochlos* with the aforementioned meaning.⁹³

It is not an easy task to confirm whether Mark intentionally privileged the use of *ochlos* over *laos*. But we gain an insight from Ahn's contention: at least in the context of the present text, reading *ochlos* as outcasts works well for this text. Descriptions in the text hint at it: the *ochlos* seeks Jesus so eagerly that they "run together" to meet him, follow him even to "a desolate place" and stay with him for a significant amount of time; when Jesus sees them, Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd"; and finally, they did not have anything to eat. Without any requisite

91. Ibid.

92. Only exceptions are 7:6 and 14:2, where Mark quotes a passage from the Old Testament and words of a scribe.

93. Ibid.

knowledge, we have imagery of outcasts from these descriptions.

For a more precise understanding of the identity of the *ochlos* in the text, a sociological analysis of the Mediterranean society at the time of Jesus would be helpful. Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann have done thorough research on this topic.⁹⁴ After surveying social stratification in ancient Mediterranean societies, they attempt to find the "social origins" of various religious movements in these societies.⁹⁵ In other words, with the supposition that each religious movement was based in a particular social stratum, Stegemann and Stegemann figure out which religious movement was based in which stratum. In short, they maintain that there were two types of movements in ancient Mediterranean societies, when categorizing them according to their social origins: one that was based among the elite and another that was based in the lower stratum. According to their research, examples of the former are Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees; and examples of the latter are prophetic-charismatic movements (non-violent) and social bandits (violent).⁹⁶ In this social-religious landscape, Stegemann and Stegemann place Jesus' followers (as well as the followers of John the Baptist) in

94. Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, enl ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999).

95. A summarizing diagram is found in *Ibid.*, 135.

96. *Ibid.*, 137-86. As Stegemann and Stegemann point out, this categorization is somewhat simplified: for example, the Pharisees belonged to the elite stratum, but they had influences on the people who belonged to the lower stratum. Contrarily, individual charismatic figures who came from the retainer class led lower-stratum movements. Basically, however, the majority of the followers were recruited from either the elite or the lower stratum.

prophetic-charismatic movements, which originated from the lower stratum.⁹⁷

So, who were the *ochlos* in the present text? They were "farmers (and in Galilee also fishermen), agricultural workers or tenants, day laborers and wage earners, indebted servants and slaves, as well as artisans, small traders, and businessmen--the latter especially in the cities."⁹⁸ They were the people who constituted the bottom of the pyramid of social hierarchy, who were the objects of colonial exploitation, who suffered most from heavy taxation, and who could not see any hope in the *status quo* of the society. Because of these social conditions, they were never treated with respect as full members of the society and they lost their dignity. Many passages in the Gospels indicate that the living conditions of both Jesus himself⁹⁹ and Jesus' followers was "on the verge of minimum existence."¹⁰⁰ For example, Jesus had "nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58 and parallel); His disciples had to satisfy their hunger by "plucking heads of grain" (Mark 2:23 and parallels); His followers were the people who had to worry about daily basics like food and clothing (Luke 12:22ff and parallel); therefore, Jesus taught them to pray for their daily bread (Luke 11:3 and parallel). These attestations correspond well to the sociological analysis of Stegemann and Stegemann. The *ochlos* in the present

97. Ibid., 193ff.

98. Ibid., 133.

99. Jesus himself, who was a carpenter, belonged to the relatively poor stratum. Ibid., 199.

100. Ibid., 202.

text are not just any crowd. They were the small, the weak, the sick, the marginalized, and the underprivileged in Jesus' contemporary Palestine.

What They Ate?

"Animals eat, humans only dine and feast," Stylianos Ioannis Vasilakis declares in his work of an analysis of Homeric meals.¹⁰¹ In this statement, he distinguishes "eating" from "dining" and "feasting": "eating" is food-consumption in a physical sense whereas "dining" and "feasting" are social activities. In terms of food, what distinguishes "dining" and "feasting" from simple "eating"? In ancient Mediterranean culture, eating bread alone could not constitute dining. To be called dining, bread needed additional food. The simplest addition was salt and the most luxurious one was meat. For example, in *On the Contemplative Life* Philo describes meals in a Jewish mystical group called the Therapeutae, the members of which lived not far from Alexandria. They showed a strong tendency toward asceticism with their meals.¹⁰² They ate bread, salt, and water in their communal meals.¹⁰³ Their meal is an example of simple dining, which was barely

101. Stylianos Ioannis Vasilakis, "Achilles' Dining and Odysseus' Eating: The Poetics of the Dinner Table in the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey'" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1998), 32.

102. For helpful comments on Therapeutae meals, see McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 56-6; Carolyn Osiek and David L Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, The Family, Religion, and Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 196-9.

103. Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 80-83. They had two versions of meals: for priests, "the unleavened bread with salt unmixed with anything else," and for members, "the

more than the simple eating of bread. Contrarily, the Homeric epics show multiple examples of dining and feasting: one immediately notices that good dining, i.e., ritual meals, hospitality meals, meals for higher ranks, always include meat.¹⁰⁴ To be sure, such expressions as "bread and salt" or "bread and meat" should be regarded as metonymic, since the ordinary diet of the ancient Mediterranean people included more than 'bread' or 'bread and meat.' Their diet was derived, for example, from "cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruit, olive oil, milk, cheese and a little fish and meat."¹⁰⁵ It is natural to expect that they had some of these foods on their tables along with the metonymic food.

In the present text, it is said that Jesus fed the *ochlos* with five loaves of bread (*artos*) and two fish (*ichthus*). Bread was the staple food; it was the basic element of every dining experience. Despite its significance in Mediterranean dining, I will not discuss it further. Rather, I will focus my discussion on fish, a significant addition to the bread, which decided the nature of this meal. What would be the nature of a meal with five loaves and two fish that was multiplied to feed five thousand?

In antiquity, first of all, we meet with negative attitudes towards fish. For example, Homeric heroes do not eat fish at all. Fish is eaten only twice in the Homeric

leavened bread, with a seasoning of salt, with which hyssop is mingled."

104. A couple of examples out of many: *Od.* 16.50, 19.420-5. For an analysis of Homeric meals, see Vasilakis, "Achilles' Dining and Odysseus' Eating."

105. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 13.

epics, when the companions of Odysseus eat fish to survive in an emergency.¹⁰⁶ In both cases, the eating of fish is followed by the explanatory clause: "because the hunger was exhausting their stomachs." It seems that Homer did not count fish as an ordinary food item at all. Similarly, Peter Garnsey lists fish as part of the humble diets in Athenaeus, based on his research on the comic fragments preserved by Athenaeus. For example, in one fragment, fish is listed with such frugal items as "pease-porridge, porridge made of pulses (*lekithos*), pressed olive skins (*stemphula*)."¹⁰⁷ Fish seems to be associated with the diet of the poor in this fragment. But it would be too hasty to draw conclusions about the general attitude toward fish in antiquity from these examples. John Scott's article, "Homeric heroes and fish" indicates that Homer's negative view of fish reflects his local prejudice. Through an examination of other classical literature, Scott found that in European Greek culture fish was a luxury item.¹⁰⁸ Garnsey also shows that there were different treatments of fish depending on the region and the type of fish.¹⁰⁹

How, then, was fish regarded by ancient Palestinian Jews? Geographical

106. *Od.*, 4.369, 12.332.

107. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 116.

108. John A. Scott, "Homeric Heroes and Fish," *Classical Journal* 12, no. 5 (1917): 328-30. He concludes:

Homer looked upon fish as food with great disfavor because as a native of Asia Minor he had been trained to regard fish as an unhealthful or distasteful food to be eaten only as a last resort and also because he had no feeling for that conception of the European Greek which regarded fish as pre-eminently the ὄψον, the greatest luxury. (330)

109. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 117.

adjacency to ocean and lake, frequent attestation of fish and fish-related parables in the Gospels¹¹⁰, and the existence of the fish-bread eucharistic meal in early Christianity¹¹¹ all suggest that fish was a part of their life. Erwin R. Goodenough gives us a more concrete explanation of how fish was incorporated in the lives of Jewish people in the Greco-Roman world. According to him, fish was "eaten of a Friday evening in honor of the Sabbath. The custom is very old . . ."¹¹² In other words, for Jewish people in the Greco-Roman period, fish was central to their *pura cena*, a festive meal on the Sabbath. It should be noted that Goodenough's concern in his work is not Jewish diet, but Jewish symbolism. Nevertheless, he argues persuasively that fish was not just a symbol for Jews in the Greco-Roman world, but it was a preferred diet, although there is no direct evidence for this:

It seems very probable, however, that the Jewish fishes at this time were not mere fetishes, used for a vague and unexplained protection, but were eaten as a special food.¹¹³

The evidence forms no chain but presents itself as a series of arrows all apparently pointing in one direction. Jews ate "pure" fish, a big fish (the tunny is

110. For examples, Matt 7:10, 13:47, 17:27; Luke 5:6ff, 24:42; John 21:5ff.

111. Graydon F Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine*, rev. ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 50; McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 128ff.

112. Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 5, *Fish, Bread, and Wine* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 42; McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 127ff.

113. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 10.

the biggest edible fish commonly caught), at a meal called the "pure supper."¹¹⁴

If Jews in the Greco-Roman world ate fish as a special food, we do not have any reason to think the situation was different in Palestine.¹¹⁵ This indirect yet highly plausible indication allows us to suppose that, unlike some contemporaries in the Greco-Roman world, Palestinian Jews ate fish as a highly regarded diet.

With this preliminary conclusion, it is time to return to the present text. If fish was highly regarded in the world of Jesus and was eaten as a part of a festive diet, how can we define the food they ate at this miraculous meal in Mark 6:32-44? As we will see in the next section, the present text has strong overtones of a *symposium*: in fact, the present text is the only place where the word *symposium* is used in the entire New Testament. Moreover, the way that the meal was arranged strongly alludes to a *symposium*. Can the presence of fish in the meal make this allusion more plausible? Three examples from Greco-Roman culture offer a positive answer to this question.

A *symposium* described by Xenophon has two main food items, namely, meat and fish:

Whenever some of those who came together for dinner brought more meat and fish than others, Socrates would tell the waiter either to put the small contributions into the common stock or to portion them out equally among the

114. Ibid., 46.

115. Another study that concurs with Goodenough's is MacDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat?*, 38.

dinners.¹¹⁶

This is direct literary support for the presence of fish in a *symposium*. There might be more of this kind of evidence in classical literature, but one will suffice as an example.¹¹⁷

Secondly, one of Plutarch's (46-120 CE) convivial company, Lamprias states:

But we shall say that of all delicacies the most legitimate kind is that from the sea. As far as the land animals whose meat is here before us is concerned, we must admit at least this if nothing else, that they consume the same food and breathe the same air as we do, and drink and bathe in water no different from ours. This has in times past made people ashamed when they butchered them in spite of their pitiful cries and in spite of having made companions of most of them and shared their store of food with them. Sea animals, on the other hand, are a species entirely alien and remote from us, as if they had sprung up and were living in some different world. Neither look nor voice nor service rendered pleads with us not to eat them, for no animal can employ these pleas that has no life at all among us; nor need we feel any affection for them.¹¹⁸

In this passage, Lamprias contends that fish is the best alternative to meat for a festive meal. His statement reflects the reality in the Hellenistic world that fish was eaten in some *symposia* and other festive meals instead of meat. In the Hellenistic era, meat was still the symbol of the *haute cuisine* of the few, but accessibility was limited. Distribution of meat was strictly controlled by the state and the meat that was available to the ordinary people in the market was what was leftover after the top of the social

116. *Memorabilia* 3.14.1

117. See also, Dennis Edwin Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 31. In his explanation of the menu of a *symposium*, Smith states, "fish was especially prized."

118. *Quaest. conv.* 669 D-E, cited in McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 138.

hierarchy had taken their fill.¹¹⁹ In sacrificial banquets of the classical era, equality was a key value and it was reflected in the principle of meat distribution: "The meat is divided out equally. This is crucial."¹²⁰ In the Hellenistic era, however, this principle was abandoned in the Roman-style social hierarchy so that the leftover meat was released to the market rather than being divided among lesser participants. To be sure, in the Hellenistic era, the number of feasts appears to have been on the increase and so was the scale of the feasts. But meat was still not easily available to non-elite citizens. For them, chances to eat meat were still there, when the banquet was provided privately by "the elite, the euergetists or public benefactors."¹²¹ These upper class groups often threw banquets "for their self-esteem, for their survival as a social group, to affirm their legitimacy."¹²² In these cases, the presence of non-elite citizens was necessary. In such cases, the lesser citizens were allowed to eat meat, although they had to sit "apart from their social and political superiors, and ate less."¹²³ It is in this situation that Lamprias suggested fish as an alternative to meat.

Thirdly, concerning this topic, Peter Ørsted's article provides substantial insights

119. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 134. Examples of the top of the social hierarchy who had "dining rights" in the sacrificial feast were priests, magistrates and senators in general, and perhaps equestrians (lesser aristocrats).

120. Ibid., 132.

121. Ibid., 134.

122. Ibid., 134.

123. Ibid., 134.

and deserves some discussion.¹²⁴ Ørsted examines Roman legal sources to find an answer to the question of how those who were not able to support themselves managed to survive. First of all, he finds three different categories of property in the Roman legal system¹²⁵:

1. The *bona singulorum*: properties that were in private ownership secured by the *jus civile*, which was valid only for Roman citizens.
2. The *bona civitatis*: common properties that were owned by the city-state. They were defined as *publica* or *communia* according to *jus civile*, i.e., for the body of citizens. Because of their public/communal nature, a tax, *vectigal*, was imposed when private persons used them (i.e., land used for agriculture). Thus, they were an important income source for the city-state.
3. The *bona naturae*: properties that were regarded as belonging to nature. Another expression for this category was *nullius res*, which meant "belongs to no one." This category extended to the resources to be found there.

According to Ørsted, sea, lakes, and their products, fish and salt, fell in the third category, *nullius res*. The Roman legal source quoted by Ørsted reads:

And because the Law of the Nations is the more ancient, as it is promulgated at the time of the origin of the human race, it is proper that it should be examined first. Therefore, all animals which are captured on land, on sea, or in

124. Peter Ørsted, "Salt, Fish and the Sea in the Roman Empire," in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, ed. Inge Nielsen and Hanne Nielsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998).

125. *Ibid.*, 16.

the air, that is to say, wild beasts and birds, as well as fish, become the property of those who take them . . . For what does not belong to anyone, by natural law becomes the property of the person who first acquires it.¹²⁶

Thus, the basic view of fish in the Greco-Roman world was as a food item that was available to anyone.

Ørsted does not stop in this categorization of fish and salt. He goes on to question whether fish was "a means whereby poor people could survive."¹²⁷ After examining fishing practices and taxation in different areas, Ørsted concludes:

If I am right in interpreting the sources in this way, two key areas were laid open to total private enterprise: fish and salt from the sea, in addition to fowling and some hunting, not discussed here. If you lived by the sea then, you could draw on these resources freely for yourself and for your family. You were offered a free--so to speak--social dinner by the state, but you had either to cook it yourself or sell it.¹²⁸

Ørsted's conclusions indicate the understanding of fish in the Greco-Roman world. Fish was a luxury food item for inland people because of the difficulty of preservation. But, at the same time, unlike meat, fish was a food item that was available even to the poor who lived close to sea or lake.

In this section, I have offered a somewhat lengthy discussion about the characteristics of fish as a food item in the Greco-Roman world. Examinations in this area lead to the conclusion that fish in the Greco-Roman world was the best available

126. Gaius, *Digest*. 41.1.1-3.

127. Ørsted, 17.

128. *Ibid.*, 26.

food item for the poor and the best alternative to the meat that had an exclusive position in all Greco-Roman festive meals. So, could the "fish and bread" meal in the present text be qualified as a *symposium* meal? My answer is affirmative. In the Greco-Roman world, including Palestine in the time of Jesus, a meal of "fish and bread" would be the best possible and reasonable combination for a *symposium* of the poor.

How They Ate?

In the previous section, I posed the possibility that the meal in Mark 6:32-44 was presented as a *symposium* of Jesus with the *ochlos*, and argued that the food of the meal supported this hypothesis. In this section, I will critically review how they ate, and will argue that the arrangement of the meal leads us to conclude that Mark describes a *symposium* in the present text. The most obvious clue for this conclusion is Mark's description of the arrangement of meal participants, συμπόσια συμπόσια. Most English translations translate this expression as "in groups," or "by companies" eliminating the obvious nuances of a *symposium*. This translation completely ignores Mark's intention of presenting the meal as a *symposium*. If Mark did not want to allude to a *symposium* through this expression, Mark would not have used this technical terminology to explain the arrangement of the meal participants. In my opinion, the best translation of συμπόσια συμπόσια is "in *symposium* like groups" or "as if for a *symposium*" so that it is distinguished from πρασαῖ πρασαῖ which immediately follows it. Indeed, the expression of συμπόσια συμπόσια itself is strong evidence for this argument.

The reason that the overtones of *symposium* elude most of readers in spite of the presence of συμπόσια συμπόσια is that other elements of the text do not seem to describe a *symposium*. That impression, however, comes from the tendency of most readers to perceive the *symposium* simply as a drinking party, an overly simplified understanding of *symposium*. Therefore, first I will negate possible oppositions to seeing a *symposium* in the present text.

No Wine and No Entertainment at a Symposium?

Can a meal without wine and entertainment be regarded as a *symposium*? Yes and no. In the classical era, a perfect symposium had three elements: *deipnon* (dining), *symposium* (drinking) and entertainment (i.e., games, learned conversation, performance of music and poetry, and sometimes sexual activities¹²⁹). In the Hellenistic era, especially in the second and first centuries BC, the ideal *symposium* declined.¹³⁰ The change was so substantial that Garnsey describes it as a "cultural change."¹³¹ The change

129. Matthew B Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), see esp. chap. 2. For an example of research on the entertainment at *symposium*, see Christopher P. Jones, "Dinner Theater," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, ed. William J Slater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 185-98.

130. My discussion below is based on Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 128-38; Inge Nielsen, "Royal Banquets: The Development of Royal Banquets and Banqueting Halls From Alexander to the Tetrarchs," in *Meals in a Social Context*, 102-33; and, George Paul, "Symposia and Deipna in Plutarch's Lives and in Other Historical Writings," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, 158.

131. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 131.

can be summarized into two ways: first, between the first two of the three elements, *deipnon* and *symposium*, the former began to dominate; second, all forms of entertainment declined except for "learned conversation." The consequence of this change was that the distinction between *deipnon* and *symposium* was blurred. Now, *symposium* was becoming a rather decent dinner gathering. To be sure, it is still hard to say that a *symposium* without wine was a banquet proper: wine remained fundamental to the *symposium*.¹³² Nevertheless in the Hellenistic era the importance of wine and entertainment in a *symposium* was significantly weakened. This cultural change allows us to call the meal in Mark 6:32-44, which included *deipnon* and learned conversation, a *symposium*, at least in the metonymic sense. Mark presents this meal as a *symposium* in the sense that it represents the best social meal of the time.

No *Kline* for a Symposium?

In the present text, Jesus orders the *ochlos* to ἀνακλῖναι in groups on the grass. ἀνακλῖναι is a technical term for "reclining" at a Greco-Roman style banquet, i.e., *symposium*. It is a transitive verb, so the proper translation is not "order to recline," but "cause [them all] to recline." Jesus does not order the *ochlos* to recline, but orders the disciples to arrange the *ochlos* such that they can recline.¹³³ This shows clear banquet overtones, since, in *symposia* and other banquets, the seats of guests should be arranged

132. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 31.

133. Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, 181.

by the slaves. A question arises from the absence of *kline* in the present text: the *ochlos* ἀνακλῖναι on the grass. In the Greco-Roman world, a *symposium* was held in a banquet room that is equipped with three to eleven *klinai*. Can a meal without *kline* be called a *symposium*? Yes. It is true that the *symposium* was typically held indoors, but this does not necessarily mean that a banquet held outdoors could not be a *symposium*. In fact, it is assumed that, before they began to have reclining dinner parties indoors, Greeks and Romans lay down "by the sea or on the grass, sometimes on hallowed ground and sometimes not."¹³⁴ And the survival of the outdoor banquet is seen in that, in the Hellenistic era, the space for the *symposium* extended to *area* or an open space, i.e., unroofed hemicycles, ornament gardens, or separate peristyle courts.¹³⁵

So Many Participants in a Symposium?

The number of participants of a symposium differed according to the size of the dining hall. In the classical era, the capacity of a dining hall was typically between fourteen (a seven-*kline* room) and twenty-two (a eleven-*kline* room).¹³⁶ In the Hellenistic period, the *triclinium* (three-couch room: nine participants) became a typical banquet

134. William J Slater, *Dining in a Classical Context*, 1.

135. Jeremy Rossiter, "Convivium and Villa in Late Antiquity," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, 199-214.

136. Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, "Ut Graeco More Biberetur: Greeks and Romans on the Dining Couch," in *Meals in a Social Context*, 83.

space.¹³⁷ These numbers are way below the 5,000 participants presented in our text. Examples of the most immense banquets in antiquity are found in royal banquets: for example, 200 guests in nine separate *symposia* at the huge Pavilion of Ptolemy II and 100 couches (thus, 300 participants) in Alexander's banquet in Babylon.¹³⁸ These numbers are huge for a banquet, and the numbers would increase when we consider the participants in outdoor facilities. Yet, these numbers are still incompatible with the 5,000 of the present text. We do not have any example of a banquet or *symposium* that accommodate 5,000 guests.

In this regard, we need to consider that Christian myth making had a tendency to describe Jesus better and more powerful than the main players in the contemporary culture. For example, Jesus was more powerful than Poseidon, when he calmed the stormy sea; Jesus was more beneficial than Asclepius, when he healed the sick; and Jesus was better Dionysus, when he produced an enormous amount of wine in Cana. Likewise, in the present text, Jesus is described as the host of an incomparably large *symposium*.

Thus, any of those possible oppositions do not outweigh the presence of *συνπόσια* *συνπόσια* and *ἀνακλῖναι* in judging the nature of the meal. In the present text, Mark presents a *symposium* of Jesus with the *ochlos*. Still, this *symposium* has a few unique

137. Ibid., 89.

138. Nielsen, "Royal Banquets," 124-5.

elements that are not found in other *symposia*. A discussion of these elements will be helpful in understanding the characteristics of the meal.

Extraordinary Conviviality

As seen above, the *symposium* in Mark 6:32-44 is extraordinarily large and abundant. Would the number, 5,000, have a symbolic meaning that Mark wants to convey? In the Greco-Roman world, most of cities had around 20,000 inhabitants. To be sure, there were larger cities such as Rome, Alexandria, Cartage, Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Thessalonica, whose populations were between 75,000 and 1,000,000. But the population of the rest of the cities, i.e., Pompeii and Jerusalem, was closer to 20,000.¹³⁹ In the text, 5,000 refers only to the number of male participants. Donahue understands that there were surely women and children as well in the scene, and that the 5,000 males "may reflect the biblical way of counting families by the heads of households and also the grouping of males at Qumran for the eschatological meal."¹⁴⁰ If that is the case, 5,000 males would express roughly the number of the population of a city. With this vast number, Mark gives an impression that Jesus throws a symposium for the whole population of a city or a town. Therefore, everyone and anyone, whether a citizen or a non-citizen, is welcomed.

139. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 57.

140. Donahue and Harrington, *Gospel of Mark*, 207.

In spite of the extraordinary size of this banquet, Mark explains that food is truly abundant. In Homeric epics, a statement that the diners' desire for food and drink is satisfied is the indication of the end of the "feast proper."¹⁴¹ Almost every feast scene in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* closes with this kind of statement.¹⁴² The closing remark, "they all ate and were satisfied" (v42), of the present text indicates that the meal qualifies as a feast proper. Furthermore, unlike Homer, Mark describes the amount of leftovers, further indicating the great abundance of food. The extraordinary abundance of food paired with the extraordinary size of the *symposium* illustrates the extraordinary conviviality of the meal.

Equality

The *symposium* in the Hellenistic era reflected the social hierarchy in the structure of the meal: the hierarchy was expressed through the quality/quantity of food and the allocation of seats.¹⁴³ In antiquity as well as today, dining often reflected social ordering and a feast functioned as a marker of social distinctions. For example, the highest people, the host and his top-ranked guests, had the privilege of eating a better portion of meat, drinking better quality wine, and the right to eat first. In contrast, lesser guests

141. Vasilakis, "Achilles' Dining and Odysseus' Eating," 24.

142. For example, *Il.* 1.469, 2.432, 7.323; *Od.* 1.150, 3.67, 8.72.

143. For food hierarchy, see: Keith Bradley, "The Roman Family at Dinner," in *Meals in a Social Context*, 37, 49. For allocation of seats, Dunbabin, "Ut Graeco More Biberetur," 83-9; Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 135-36.

were served a diminished quality and quantity of food. Besides the food served, the arrangement of seats visually demonstrated a hierarchy that mirrored the social structure.

Smith explains the hierarchy of the seats:

The person occupying the highest position at table would be the guest of honor, and the other diners would be arranged according to rank to his right. The Roman designated the highest position to be that of the "consul," indicating in political terms its significance as a position of honor and authority.¹⁴⁴

Far from these privileged seats, the less distinguished were seated on the low benches.

As Bradley explains: "The 'inferior persons' on the low benches could not even reach the main table, so that their marginality was again quite literally, and even structurally, built into the dining-room."¹⁴⁵ Thus, social hierarchy was not just mirrored in the *symposium*, but also re-affirmed and re-generated. As Garnsey has said, that was an implicit purpose of social meals.¹⁴⁶

In Mark 6, however, we do not find any evidence for this notion of inequality. Rather, when we hear, "they *all* ate and were satisfied" (emphasis mine), we have an impression of a meal of equality.

Reversed Order

Matthew B. Roller's *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome* provides us with interesting

144. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 34.

145. Bradley, "Roman Family at Dinner," 49.

146. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 134.

insights concerning the roles of participants in the *symposium* in Mark 6. According to his research on mural decorations, wall paintings and various literary texts of the Greco-Roman world, the social hierarchy was inscribed in dining postures. Roller states:

On the contrary, the heads of the lowest-status persons--the standing slave--must typically have been higher than the heads of the more privileged reclining persons, and also higher than anyone who happened to be seated. A different hierarchical principle is at work here: the body that must move or take action in response to another body or bodies is inferior, while the body that does not move or take action in response to others is superior; likewise, if one body must remain in a state of poised tension (e.g., "standing at attention"), hence ready to act, when in proximity to another body that is more relaxed, the former is inferior and the latter superior.¹⁴⁷

If I summarize Roller's thorough research on this topic in a visual image that reflects social position and dining posture, it would be, reclining guests and standing slaves. To be sure, in some literary works, we find some guests standing. But those cases are not only rare but also scandalous.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, slaves have been represented as reclining to dine. But such cases are limited, first, to festival days, and second, to times when no free persons are present.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, the dichotomy of "reclining guests" and "standing slaves" is the norm in the context of a *symposium*.

This dichotomy is applicable to the present text. We can divide the participants of the symposium into two groups: those who recline and those who stand. The former are

147. Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome*, 20.

148. For example, Suetonius (*Iul.* 49.2) reports Julius Caesar's "slavish standing" in a convivium. *Ibid.*, 86.

149. *Ibid.*, 21.

the *ochlos* and the latter are Jesus and his disciples. As discussed above, the *ochlos* "recline" in symposium-like groups whereas Jesus and his disciples "stand" and "serve" them. While there are no verbs for "standing" and "serving" in the present text, the actions of Jesus and his disciples described in the second half of v41 clearly indicate that they "stand" and "serve": "He [Jesus] kept giving them [bread] to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all."

In this regard, the imperfect tense ἐδίδου in v41 is illustrative. As mentioned above, in v41 there are four "eucharistic" verbs: λαβὼν, εὐλόγησεν, κατέκλασεν, and ἐδίδου.¹⁵⁰ All of these four verbs are in the aorist tense both in v41 and 14:22. The only exception is ἐδίδου in v41: it is imperfect. From this observation, it is clear that Mark intentionally alters the tense to express a repeated action, rendering the action of Jesus into the mode of diligently working, that is, the mode of a dining-room slave. Of course, Jesus in the first half of v41 is described as playing the role of the host of the *symposium*. Immediately, however, in the second half of v41, the role of Jesus is reversed into that of a slave, or at most, the *architriklinos*, the head slave who was responsible managing a *symposium* in a *triclinium*.¹⁵¹

The slavish role of the disciples is implied in the verb, παρατιθῶσιν (lit. set before). In classical literature, παρατίθημι is used as a technical term for setting up food

150. To be sure, instead of κατέκλασεν, 14:22 has ἔκλασεν.

151. John 2:8. Also see the definition of *Architriklinos* in BDAG.

(i.e., meat or bread) before guests in a symposium or a banquet. Other examples outside of the New Testament clarify its meaning: οἱ παρατιθέντες is used for the serving-men in a dining room, and τὰ παρατιθέμενα for meats set before someone.¹⁵² This verb therefore indicates that the disciples are doing what dining-room slaves are supposed to do. Thus, in the *symposium* of the present text, Jesus and his disciples as "standing slaves" serve the "reclining" *ochlos*.

Dining room slaves were not equivalent to "waiters" in modern restaurants. Their duties in the dining-room were not just setting food and seats for guests, but included many more lowly obligations. A description of the various types of slaves that might be assigned to an esteemed guest gives us an idea of the filthy nature of their work: "a catamite with feathers to induce vomiting; a concubine to cool him with a fan; a slave boy to shoo away flies with a sprig of myrtle; a shampooer to massage his limbs; and a eunuch to help him urinate."¹⁵³ Harsh punishments for trifling mistakes and the direct sexual exploitation of male and female slaves are just a couple of examples that expose their pitiful status.¹⁵⁴ In the present text, Jesus and the disciples are not described with

152. According to Liddell and Scott, παρατίθημι in some passages in the New Testament also have this definition, i.e., Luke 10:8, 11:6; Acts 16:34; 1 Cor 10:27: H. Liddell and R. Scott, "παρα-τηρέω, παρατίθημι," *LSJ* 1327-28.

153. D'Arms John H., "Slaves at Roman Convivia," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, 172. For a primary text that gives an example of the Greco-Roman banquets and the role of dining slaves, see Petronius Arbiter, *The Satyricon*, trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

154. D'Arms, "Slaves at Roman Convivia," 173.

such images. However, when they take the role of slaves, they also take the social connotation imposed upon dining room slaves.

A Unique Christology and a Unique Symposium

This is a distinguishing feature of the *symposium* of the present text: the Son of God descends into the human world, becomes a slave, and serves lowly people.¹⁵⁵ As far as my knowledge serves, it is unique: no similar account is found in contemporary cultural or religious milieus. Odysseus becomes a beggar, but his table with the suitors is a completely different story. Another dining scene in the *Odyssey*, the dinner at Laertes' farmhouse may draw our attention, since in the dinner the slave, Dolius, and his sons are described as sitting down and partaking of the same feast as Odysseus.¹⁵⁶ This scene, however is not compatible with the present text, since Laertes is Odysseus' father. Indeed, in the Greco-Roman literature, many deities descend and take on human form: i.e., Dionysus in the *Bacchae*, Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and Isis in *On Isis and Osiris*, to name a few. None of these, however, show the pattern found in the present text. The uniqueness of the *symposium* in Mark 6 suggests that, although Mark's literary rendering is present in the text, the key idea of having a meal with the lowly is rooted in the historical Jesus movement.

155. The Gospel of Mark declares Jesus as the Son of God from the very beginning.

156. *Od.* 24.394-96, 408-12.

In my examination of Mark 6: 32-44, two unique elements stand out: a unique Christology and a unique *symposium*. Jesus is a unique deity, who lowers himself to be a dining room slave; his *symposium* is also unique with its extraordinary size and abundance as well as its unconventional guests. So, with these two unique aspects, what does Mark want to say?

In anthropological terms, a meal is a code expressing "social relations and structures"¹⁵⁷ and it is a "strong marker of social boundaries."¹⁵⁸ In the present Markan *symposium*, the boundary between Jesus as the Son of God and the *ochlos* as the people of the lowest social position completely collapses. In this sense, the present *symposium* is a means to express a new relationship between Jesus and the *ochlos*, and the manifestation of euphoria that accompanies this new relationship.

If that is the sociological/anthropological nature of the present *symposium*, what theological message does it carry? This pericope answers the question: "Who are the people of God?" For the Jewish people in the time of Jesus, the answer to this question was those who were "clean" or "pious." But ritual cleanness and religious piety was not just a matter of mind, but also a matter of social strata. Many people, who were perceived as "unclean" or "impious," could not meet the requirements of being "clean" and "pious," simply because they did not have time or money. They were excluded from

157. Douglas, "Diciphering a Meal," 45.

158. Scholliers, *Food, Drink and Identity*, 9.

the people of God from the beginning. Jesus changed this reality by suggesting a new requirement that was "easy" and "light"¹⁵⁹ by setting an example: anyone who followed Jesus in serving the lowly could be a part of the people of God. To illustrate this, Jesus invited "the lowly," those who were rejected or stood outside of social boundaries, and ate and drank with them. By choosing this group of people as the guests to his *symposium*, Jesus showed that his table was his meeting place not with a particular group of people, but with *all* human beings, even including "the lowest." Christians who struggled to form their own identity out of Judaism cherished this tradition of Jesus, and differentiated themselves from the contemporary Jewish people with this tradition. Thus, the *symposium* in the present text is an enacted parable that demonstrates the nature of this new identity of Christianity.

Now, as we turn to some of our earliest Christian communities, we can see how Paul struggled to keep alive this early tradition of an inclusive Christian table.

159. Matt 11:30.

Chapter 5

Eating and Drinking as Paul's *Locus* to Maintain Jesus' Egalitarianism (Gal 2:11-21, 1 Cor 11:17-34, 14:34-35)

In the previous chapter, we examined the account of Jesus' unique *symposium* and the christological concept embedded in the account. In a nutshell, Jesus illustrated through his *symposium* that no one, regardless of their social class and religious status, should be excluded from the reality of the kingdom of God that was inaugurated by Jesus' ministry. In fact, the christological concept--Jesus became a slave--and the consequent ethical request for his followers--they should also serve others with slave-like humbleness--recur throughout the New Testament, i.e., Mark 9:35, 10:43-45, John 13:3-17, Rom 15:8-9, 1 Cor 9:19, and Phil 2:5-11. Among these attestations, especially Phil 2:5-11, a pre-Pauline Christian hymn, indicates that the notion that Christ became a slave was one of the earliest Christian beliefs about Jesus, and that this belief was central to their communal worship.

A theological implication of this christological notion is, in Riley's term, "the principle of equality of souls": every one is equal for God's grace. Riley brings out this principle as an original Christian idea that differentiated Christianity from Judaism. He states:

One of the most noteworthy points of genius of the Christian message was the real recognition and application of the principle of equality of souls: that is, nothing having to do with the body or the material world--neither physical appearance, ethnicity, social distinction, nor gender--qualified one as superior or

inferior in the eyes of God.¹⁶⁰

By serving those who were the bottom of social and religious hierarchy, Jesus

demonstrated how to practice the principle of equality of souls. Riley continues:

Yet such high ideals were not held by all, and some Jews who became Christians resisted understanding the Law of Moses as having been superseded by Christ. Instead, they continued to follow the rituals and ceremonies prescribed by the Law and required all gentile Christians to do the same, essentially requiring them to first become Jews before becoming Christians.¹⁶¹

This statement explains the conflicts between, generally, Christian ideals and the reality in which early Christians were located. The Pauline letters reflect these conflicts between Christian ideals and Jewish traditions. The conflicts, however, were not limited to that between Jews and Gentiles: Christian ideals were in conflict in other areas of social relations such as those between male and female, between free people and slaves, and between the rich and the poor.

Through his letters, Paul endeavored to solve or modify these tensions in the early Christian community. Pauline letters address practical issues in the early church. As Adolf Deissmann pointed out nearly a century ago, Paul's letters were not treatises or formal statement of doctrine, but were directed to specific situations.¹⁶² While this is certainly the case, it has been under emphasized that, when Paul coped with practical

160. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 10.

161. *Ibid.*, 10-11.

162. Adolf Deissmann, *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 10-12.

problems through his letters, he did so with an eye to providing an overarching ideal for the burgeoning Christian community. That ideal is clearly and daringly expressed in Gal 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."¹⁶³ This single verse well summarizes the Pauline ideal for the Christian community, which Fiorenza designates as an "egalitarian ethos of 'oneness in Christ.'"¹⁶⁴ Paul dreamed of and fought for the community where the principle of equality of souls was realized. In this sense, Paul was not a corrupter of Jesus' movement.¹⁶⁵ Rather, Paul should be understood as the one who attempted to articulate theologically and to apply practically the ideals and practices of Jesus' movement in the early church.¹⁶⁶

163. For a summary of scholastic interpretations on this verse, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 205ff: A shortened version of her article is Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Praxis of Coequal Discipleship," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997). For a history of interpretation to the late fourth century on this verse, see Pauline Nigh Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female: Interpreting Galatians 3:28 in Early Christianity*, Library of New Testament Studies, 380 (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

164. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 218. She elaborates, "It proclaims that in the Christian community all distinctions of religion, race, class, nationality, and gender are insignificant. All the baptized are equal, they are one in Christ" (213).

165. William Wrede's labelling of Paul as the "second founder of Christianity" implies the denial of continuity between Jesus and Paul. A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus: The Problem of Continuity," in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 100.

166. Riley, Borg and Crossan are just a few out of many scholars who support the continuity between Jesus and Paul. See, Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 150-57; Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary*

As is often the case, though, these Christian ideals clashed with reality and this Pauline ideal announced in Gal 3:28 was not an exception. Even in some passages in Paul's own writing, we observe contradictions between Paul's egalitarian ideal and his acceptance of the *de facto* social order of the culture where Paul was located. For example, "there is no male and female" in the Pauline ideal contradicts Paul's own instructions for women's role in the Corinthian church.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, as time passed, the Pauline ideal faded as early as in the writing of the Deutero-Pauline letters. For example, as Young Suk Kim points out, the Pauline "body of Christ" in 1 Cor 12:27 that was the embodiment of the Pauline ideal is regressed in the "body of Christ" in Col 1:18 and Eph 1:22-23, 4:12.¹⁶⁸ In the former, Paul declares the community to be "σῶμα Χριστοῦ" using the predicate nominative. Here, the "σῶμα Χριστοῦ" is associated with the physical body of Christ: thus, the community is completely identified with Christ.¹⁶⁹

behind the Church's Conservative Icon (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 11. For more about the debate of continuity/discontinuity between Jesus and Paul, A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

167. 1 Cor 14:33-6. One solution for this contradiction is to accept this verses as a post-Pauline interpolation. Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 246. But I agree with Schüssler Fiorenza that "it is exegetically more sound to accept them as original Pauline statements and then explain them within their present context." Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 230.

168. Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 65.

169. von Campenhausen's historical description on the Pauline community is helpful for understanding how the Pauline *soma christou* was conceptualized. It was egalitarian having only the Spirit as the organizing power:

In Paul's thought, therefore, the congregation is not just another

Contrarily, in the Deutero-Pauline letters, the emphasis is shifted so that Jesus is the head of the body in a hierarchical sense. And the church is not declared as the "body of Christ," but desired to be the "body of Christ" as something to be "built."¹⁷⁰ This shift reflects the emergence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy that I will discuss in the next chapter. The radical Pauline egalitarianism began to be replaced with the hierarchical order.¹⁷¹ Obviously, after Paul, there was a regression of the Pauline ideal, but did the Pauline ideal completely fade away from the stage of early Christianity?

A third-century catacomb fresco at Rome leads us to believe that the Pauline ideal was persistent in the early church even after it experienced this regression. A eucharistic picture, the so-called '*fractio panis*' (breaking bread) from the catacomb of Priscilla, depicts a Christian communal meal in which women dined with men.¹⁷² In the fresco,

constitutional organisation with grades and classes, but a unitary, living cosmos of free, spiritual gifts, which serve and complement one another. Those who mediate these gifts may never lord it over one another, or refuse to have anything to do with one another. To the extent that any element of compulsion, any permanent seat of command is expressly excluded, the resultant picture of the community, understood in terms of human social order, is utopian.

von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 63-4.

170. Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth : The Politics of a Metaphor*, 65.

171. Borg and Crossan also provides another example of regression of the Pauline ideal in the Deutero-Pauline letters and the Pastoral letters. They observe the change of attitudes on slavery from the "radical Paul" of the letter to Philemon (vv15-16) to the "conservative Paul" of the letter to Colossians (3:22-25) and Ephesians (6:5-8) and then to the "reactionary Paul" of the letter to Titus (2:9). Borg and Crossan, *First Paul*, 31-47.

172. James Stevenson, *The Catacombs: Life and Death in Early Christianity* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1985), 94-5.

moreover, the one who breaks bread, assumedly a bishop or a presbyter, is female.¹⁷³

The significance of the presence and the role of women in the fresco is accentuated when we consider the Roman dining code for women described in Roman literary texts and paintings. In short, in Roman dining, women were set apart from men by their dining location (not with men) and dining posture (seated rather than reclining). When women reclined with men there was an assumed sexual connotation.¹⁷⁴ Unmistakably, in contemporary Roman culture, there was no such dining scene as found in the *fractio panis*. Therefore, the distinctive dining-description of the *fractio panis*, in which women and men reclined together in egalitarian fellowship without sexual connotation, suggests that the Pauline ideal survived and became an identity marker of early Christians: Paul and his colleagues/followers ate and drank in different ways from their contemporaries.

Claude Grignon's typology of commensality helps to define the different nature of meals between Paul and his contemporaries.¹⁷⁵ Among Grignon's three sets of

173. Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 52.

174. Bradley, "Roman Family at Dinner"; Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome*; Matthew B Roller, "Horizontal Women: Posture and Sex in the Roman *Convivium*," in *Roman Dining*, ed. Barbara K. Gold and John F. Donahue (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). Comparison of the *fractio panis* with a collection of Roman funerary art that shows dining scenes and reclining postures in *Roman Dining* is helpful for visualizing the difference between the eucharistic meal and contemporary Roman dining. Barbara K Gold and John F Donahue, *Roman Dining* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 114ff.

175. Grignon's definition of commensality is "a gathering aimed to accomplish in a collective way some material tasks and symbolic obligations linked to the satisfaction

typologies, the typology of segregative/transgressive commensality fits for our purpose. According to Grignon, segregative commensality is "to set up or to restore the group by closing it a way to assert or to strengthen a 'We' by pointing out and rejecting, as symbols of otherness, the 'not We,' strangers, rivals, enemies, superiors or inferiors."¹⁷⁶

Grignon continues:

The strong and ideally typical forms of segregative commensality are likely to be found in hierarchised and discontinuous societies, those in which hierarchisation is the very principle of structure and social life, and where this hierarchisation goes with social heterogeneity and repulsion, which render the distances between social universes impassable and the very idea of passing unthinkable.¹⁷⁷

As further discussion about the Roman dining code below will elucidate, the strict Roman dining code of male/female and free/slave suggests that Roman dining in general fit into this category. That is to say that everyday household dining in Roman culture affirmed and strengthened the social distance between different the statuses and genders. Dining among Jews and gentiles was not different. They did not eat together to maintain their cultural religious differences. This was the *de facto* culture in which Paul was located and confronted.

Transgressive commensality is contrary to the segregative type. It "plays upon

of a biological individual need." The communal meal of early Christians as well as religious meals in general fits this definition. Claude Grignon, "Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay of Typology," in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 24.

176. Ibid., 28-9.

177. Ibid., 29.

oppositions between social groups and the borders which separate them."¹⁷⁸ Based on Grignon, John F. Donahue elaborates the characteristics of this type of meal: "this type of feasting both recognizes these borders and allows them to be crossed temporarily in order to provide a relationship of exchange between parties of different social or economic status."¹⁷⁹ According to Donahue, this type of commensality has three common features:

(1) the asymmetry of the relationship between the superior and the inferior diners; (2) the need for the dominant host to be recognizable among his guests, offering himself in the process as a "gift" to the diners for a certain period of time; and (3) the requirement that the dominant party eat the same food as everybody else in order to show that he recognizes common needs and tastes.¹⁸⁰

From this characterization, we know that the common meal at the Pauline household church fulfilled these criteria. For example, there was the asymmetry of the relationship between the diners, i.e., the superior (Jews, men, and free) and the inferior (gentiles, women and slave). Although their social statuses were different, they ate the same food at the same table or couch. And the imaginative presence of Jesus Christ, who offered himself as a "gift," fulfilled the need for the dominant host. The Pauline meal was transgressive whereas the contemporary Roman household meal was segregative.

That is to say, Paul and his fellow Christians breached the Roman and Jewish

178. Ibid., 30.

179. John F Donahue, "Toward a Typology of Roman Public Feasting," in *Roman Dining*, 106.

180. Ibid., 107.

dining codes that respected the customary social distance between different social/ethnic statuses and genders. In the Pauline household church, Jews ate together with gentiles, men with women and free with slave. The codified eating protocol provides identification by defining what they eat, with whom they eat and how they eat.¹⁸¹ But the identification maintained by the eating protocol is not static: it is "a complicated, dialectical process of adaptation, rejection and interpretation."¹⁸² When the Pauline church breached the dining protocol it consequently brought about crises for the diners in terms of identity (what are we then?) and in terms of dining practices (how do we ate then?) and thus the situation called for a "process of adaptation, rejection and interpretation." Simply speaking, when the household-church members were gathered for the eucharistic meal, the meal that they had in the church was not the meal that they used to have in their households. The nature of the meal was shifted from segregative to transgressive. Apart from the outsiders' view, it was an unfamiliar situation for the insiders to participate in the meal with Jews/gentiles, men/women and free/slave together. The problem was that there was no clear consensus of the dining manners, and it caused confusion, rejection, and contestation. Although, when they became Christian they confessed Jesus Christ as their common Lord and followed Jesus' teachings including the principle of equality of souls, they still faced delicate situations in their

181. Scholliers, "Meals, Food Narratives, and Sentiments of Belonging in Past and Present," 8-9.

182. *Ibid.*, 15.

commensality because of dissent in some practical matters, i.e., "Is a mixed table between Jews and un-circumcised gentiles permissible?" "Is it permissible for women to recline with men?" and "Who would prepare the meal? Still slaves?"

I do not mean to reduce the issues of the Pauline letters into those practical problems. These practical matters, however, have been ignored by Pauline interpreters. As the Roman dining code was not just a collection of practical dining manners, but also an expression of the social and gender hierarchy of the Roman society, so also were these practical matters in the Pauline church directly related to more profound social and theological matters. Likewise, reading Paul (especially Galatians and 1 Corinthians) within the framework of conflicts over the dining-code will provide fresh insights for better understanding Paul's struggle to realize his theological ideals that were handed over from Jesus movement. In this chapter, I will discuss three Pauline passages in which the dining code was at stake, i.e., Gal 2:11-21 and 1 Cor 11:17-34. From the discussion, we will see that Paul did not approach these practical issues not just by providing a new dining-code but by using theological rhetoric such as "justification by faith" and "the body of Christ."

Justification by Faith and Transgressive Commensality between Jews and Gentiles (Gal 2:11-21)

Paul's "justification by faith" has consistently been understood as a doctrine which is related to personal inner sin. This kind of introspective interpretation of Paul begins

with Augustine and reaches its climax in Martin Luther's interpretation.¹⁸³ As Donaldson points out, Christians have tried to find an answer in Paul's argument of "justification by faith" to the question, "How can sinful humanity find acceptance before a righteous God?", especially in terms of a fundamental contrast with "justification by works".¹⁸⁴ But Chang-Rak Kim, a Korean New Testament scholar, strongly doubts whether Paul really intended to give an answer to this question by his "justification by faith." Kim argues in his commentary on Galatians that the Antioch Incident was the first occasion Paul used this theological concept, and that, in the Antioch context, Paul's use of "justification by faith" was not meant to explain a doctrine but to defend Gentile equality in Christian communities in the Galatian situation.¹⁸⁵ Accepting Kim's arguments, I will elaborate on the Antioch conflict in its literary and historical context and then summarize a related debate between James Dunn and Philip Esler. This investigation will confirm that Paul's "justification by faith" was theological rhetoric meant to nullify the Jewish dining code, which prohibited a mixed dining with gentiles, and to build up a new

183. Krister. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 85.

184. Terence L Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 4.

185. Chang-Rak Kim, 갈라디아서 [A Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians] (Seoul, Korea: CLSK, 1999), 204-07. Before Kim, Markus Barth also noted the social dimension of "justification by faith" with a close analysis of Gal 2:15-21, interpreting it as a "social happening." His analysis and argument gives insight into interpreting the text with a social perspective, but his discussion still has a strong doctrinal connotation. Markus Barth, "Jews and Gentiles: The Social Character of Justification in Paul," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 2 (1968): 241-67.

independent Christian identity. In Antioch, Paul persisted with mixed dining. For Paul, however, this was not just a matter of eating and drinking: it was a practicable expression of his ecclesiastical and theological ideals rooted in Jesus' movement.

Literary Context

First of all, we should discern two overlapping layers of the text. The text, Gal 2:11-21, is a part of Paul's debate with his opponents in the Galatian churches. The first churches had a serious issue which was related with the path to salvation. Jewish Christians maintained that a person who wanted to be a Christian must convert to Judaism before becoming a Christian and keep the law. As Ehrman explains, they thought, "Jesus had been sent by the Jewish God to the Jewish people in fulfillment of the Jewish law to be the Jewish messiah."¹⁸⁶ Especially in the Galatians churches, this matter became controversial, because, after Paul's short mission in Galatia establishing the churches (Acts 13:14-48), the "false believers" (Gal 2:4), those who kept practicing Jewish customs and believed in Jesus, came to Galatia and taught the Galatians "a different gospel" (Gal 1:6). According to Paul's sayings, their arguments are "Paul is not a genuine apostle" (Gal 1:11-17), "Keep the sacred dietary requirements" (Gal 2:11-14), "Follow Abraham in the rite of circumcision" (Gal 3:5-29, 6:13), and "Keep the Jewish feasts" (Gal 4:10). Paul recognized this situation and wrote the Letter to the Galatians,

186. Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 260.

including the report of the Antioch conflict, as a “counterclaim” to their argument.

While refuting his opponents’ arguments (2:4), Paul reported the Antioch conflict to the Galatian churches (2:11-14a), quoting his rebuke against Cephas (2:14-21). Thus, this text reflects two historical situations: Antioch and Galatia. Among these two, only the former will be discussed.

Another literary issue related with the present text is to decide where the direct quotation ends. This matter is important for determining whether the Antioch conflict is the first time and place where Paul used “justification by faith.” In the literary context, εἶπον τῷ Κηφᾷ ἔμπροσθεν πάντων (2:14) clearly indicates the beginning of the direct quotation. The difficulty lies in determining where the end of the quotation is. The NRSV as well as many other English versions of the New Testament begins the quotation at v 14b and ends it at the end of v.14. In this case, “justification by faith” in v16 does not belong to the direct quotation: therefore, it was not used in Antioch. But, in the Greek text, there is no indication to support the end of the direct quotation in the NRSV. The problem is that Greek does not have the convention of quotation marks. Alternatively, Greek uses several ways to indicate the beginning of a direct quotation,¹⁸⁷ yet there is no specific way to indicate the end of a direct quotation.

The NRSV and other English versions only include v.14 in the quotation probably

187. For example, using a ὅτι clause, the neuter singular article, and nominative of appellation. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 61, 237f, 454f, 748.

because of the subject of the sentence, “you.” However, since Paul varies the subject of the sentences in Gal 2:14-21 for rhetorical purposes, it is not persuasive to decide the limit of the direct quotation based only on the subject of the sentences. First in vv 14b-15, Cephas appears as the second singular pronoun “you.” This part of the speech is clearly directed at Cephas. Next in vv 15-17, both Cephas and Paul are included in the first plural pronoun “we.” It is an example of the inclusive usage of “we.” We need to keep in mind the context: this scene was public “before them all (Gal 2:14)” rather than interpersonal between Paul and Cephas. The inclusive “we” makes the division between the speaker and the audience unclear: rather, it makes all the audience including Cephas take the same position with Paul on the issue and forms a front line against the “false teachers.” Martyn classified this rhetorical technique as “*captatio benevolentiae*, the introductory means,” by which the speaker captures his audience by means of a friendly reference to something he shares with them.¹⁸⁸ Lastly in vv 18-21, Paul appears as the first person singular pronoun “I,” illustrating his arguments from his own life and experience.

In regard to this issue, Hans Betz provides a convincing solution. Betz analyzes this text with ancient rhetorical terms borrowed from ancient rhetorician Quintilian, that is, “*narratio*” and “*propositio*.” The *propositio* sums up the *narratio*. According to Betz,

188. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 248.

Gal 2:15-21 is a *propositio* of Gal 2:11-14, a *narratio*.¹⁸⁹ In this case the quotation ends with 2:14 formally, but in the aspect of content, it includes Gal 2:15-21. Martyn's suggestion is also convincing. He understands that Paul intentionally failed to close the quotation in order to transfer the attack from Cephas to "the false teachers." He insists, "verses 15 and 16 constitute an overlap between the once-upon-a-time remark to Peter and the contemporary speech to the Teachers."¹⁹⁰ These two analyses lead to the conclusion that, although Paul might embellish his writing to Galatians after the Antioch incident, Gal 2:14-21 is basically based on what he actually spoke at Antioch, and that Paul's reference of "being justified by faith" in v.16 and "being justified in Christ" in v.17 is a part of Paul's report about the Antioch incident to the Galatians.

The significance of this is that, with this conclusion, it is reasonable to assume that the first place where Paul used "justification by faith" was at the Antioch incident. In the "undisputed" and the "deutero" Pauline Epistles, Paul used "being justified" 15 times and "justification by faith" 6 times. Most of them are found in Romans and Galatians, and others are found in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Scholars guess that Romans was written in 56-57 C.E., Galatians in 50-56 C.E., 1 Corinthians in 54 C.E., and 2 Corinthians in 55-56 C.E. In this chronology of the Pauline letters, we cannot decide where Paul used the

189. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 115.

190. Martyn, *Galatians*, 230.

term “being justified” for the first time, whether in Galatians or 1 Corinthians, especially between Gal 2:16-17 or 1 Cor 6:11. But the Antioch conflict happened c. 48-49 C.E. about six years earlier than 1 Corinthians.¹⁹¹ Therefore, we may conjecture that Paul used the term in Antioch for the first time while debating Cephas, reused it in the context of Galatians, and later he developed it into a more sophisticated theological term in Romans. When he referred to the term for the first time, he did not intend to invent a new doctrine *per se* as a solution to personal inner sin but intended to contend for the equality of gentile Christians in a specific situation. The implied meaning of justification by faith at Antioch will be clarified in the discussion below.

Historical Context

The Antioch conflict should be understood with respect to the Jerusalem conference. After dissension in the matter of observance of the law, especially circumcision, possibly in 49 C.E., Paul visited Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus for a meeting with Peter, James, and other leaders. In this meeting the Jerusalem leaders agreed with Paul and other gentile missionaries that gentiles did not have to be circumcised (Gal 2:1-10 and Acts 15:1-19), and then, according to Acts, they sent Barnabas and Silas with the letter that proclaimed the agreement to Antioch. When the

191. This chronology is based on Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series, vol. 244 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 32, n24.

members of the Antioch church read the letter, they rejoiced at the exhortation (Acts 15:22-35).¹⁹²

Ostensibly, the tension seemed to be resolved, but not long after the conference, the concordance was shaken by Cephas and others. While staying in the Antioch church after the conference, Cephas joined with Paul and Jewish Christians in sharing “table fellowship” with the gentile believers.¹⁹³ The imperfect form of the verb *συνήσθιεν* shows us that the common meal was not a single event but an event which had been repeated, alluding that it was a eucharistic meal. But when certain people coming from James arrived at the church, Cephas withdrew from fellowship with the gentiles, and then the other Jewish Christians and even Barnabas followed him (Gal 2:12-13). Paul understood this withdrawal as an act of hypocrisy and rebuked Cephas in front of the

192. Slee suggests that the Apostolic Decree was formulated not at the Jerusalem Council, but in Antioch, after Paul's departure from the Antioch church, whereas Esler regards the account of the Jerusalem Council as a Lucan creation. *Ibid.*, 49; Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 106. For similar opinions, see C. K. Barrett, “Apostles in Council and Conflict,” in *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. C. K. Barrett (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985); James D. G. Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 18 (1983): 38. These suggestions are probable, but I will not discuss it here since, for the present study, the location of the formulation of the Decree is not crucial.

193. This traditional reconstruction of the chronological order of Jerusalem Council and the Antioch Incident is based on Slee, *Church in Antioch in the First Century CE*, 36-52. As Slee discusses, there are scholars who suggest the reverse order, that is, that the incident in Antioch took place before the Jerusalem Council. See for example, F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 128. This order is questionable as Slee persuasively explains in *Church in Antioch*, 45.

whole church with the term, "being justified by faith" (Gal 2:16, 17).

Then, what was at stake in this incident in Antioch? The simplest answer is the mixed table-fellowship between Jews and gentiles. Slee's explanation of this subject well defines the issue behind the mixed table-fellowship:

... the specific problem was a tablefellowship one and the particular reason for criticism . . . was that the Antioch church was not only accepting Gentiles in a Law-free state, but (as the Hellenists had in Jerusalem with their Godfearing friends) they were eating with these Gentiles, attending the same communal meals, in particular the Eucharist meal, and all would have passed around the one cup of wine and one loaf of bread and all would have touched the same vessels and food, and sat in close contact. However, in the opinion of other Jews within first century Judaism and within the first century Church this was apostasy. Jews engaging in such close tablefellowship with impure Gentiles were contaminating themselves and turning their back on the God of Israel.¹⁹⁴

Although Slee's summary well defines the posed problem by the mixed table-fellowship, it is not accepted unanimously. In fact, the incident at Antioch has received much scholarly attention, producing many different interpretations and suggestions. Among them, a debate between Dunn and Esler will enrich understanding of the incident.

James Dunn's New Perspective on Paul

Dunn, developing E. P. Sanders' proposal for a new framework to understand Paul, that is, "covenantal nomism," interprets early Christianity within late second-temple Judaism and proposes a "new perspective on Paul."¹⁹⁵ Dunn, departing from the

194. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 31.

195. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, esp. 75, 420, 544; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, KY:

traditional dichotomy between faith and works, argues that faith and works do not necessarily exclude each other:

We should not let our grasp of Paul's reasoning slip back into the old distinction between faith and works in general, between faith and 'good works'. Paul is not arguing here for a concept of faith which is totally passive because it fears to become a 'work'. It is the demand for a *particular* work as the necessary expression of faith which he denies.¹⁹⁶

In this understanding, Dunn also argues that Paul's justification by faith, which is the present topic, did not emerge "in response to his 'judaizing' opponents," but "in its essence, it was simply a restatement of the first principles of his own ancestral faith."¹⁹⁷

In this understanding of Paul and his justification by faith, the traditional understanding of the Antioch incident is a stumbling block, since what happened in the incident, especially Paul's contestation against Peter, seems not to be in alignment with this new understanding. If the core issue of the incident was the mixed table-fellowship between Jews and gentiles as traditionally accepted, it contradicts Dunn's argument above.

Dunn answers this impediment in his article "The Incident at Antioch." In this article, with presuppositions that early Christianity was a sect within Judaism, and that the Antioch church was a Jewish church embracing God-fearing gentiles, Dunn proposes

Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), chap. 7.

196. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 198. The traditional dichotomy, according to Dunn, originates from Baur's thesis, "Christianity was shaped by the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, that is, by the conflict of Jewish and Gentile partisans, but within Christianity.": Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 339-40.

197. *Ibid.*, 345.

that the core issue of the incident is not the mixed table-fellowship, but the food they ate.¹⁹⁸ Dunn's points are, first, in the late second-temple period, in spite of traditional prohibitions, Jews actually ate with certain gentiles such as proselytes, resident aliens, and God-fearers;¹⁹⁹ second, therefore, the mixed table-fellowship at Antioch was not the issue;²⁰⁰ and lastly, the real issue that the men from James objected to or found fault with was the degree of observation of the dietary law.²⁰¹ Thus, Dunn shifts the issue from the eaters to the type of food.

The implication proposed by Dunn is more significant than it seems to be. If Dunn's interpretation is the case, the nature of the Antioch incident was an intra-Judaism event: it was about how strictly the purity law and the dietary law should be observed. In this case, Paul's confrontation with Peter and the others was the result of his misunderstanding that justification by faith and covenantal nomism were not "two complementary emphases, but were in direct antithesis to each other."²⁰² As a result of the conflict, Paul lost his ground in the Antioch church and became an independent missionary.²⁰³ Thus, in Dunn's understanding, the Antioch incident becomes a proof that

198. Dunn, "Incident at Antioch", 5, 12, 29-32.

199. Ibid., 19-23.

200. Ibid., 27.

201. Ibid., 29-32.

202. Ibid., 41.

203. Ibid., 39. This thesis is further developed in Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*, Journal

the early Church was Jewish in identity rather than forming its own Christian identity.

Dunn's proposal opens, as his lecture title designates, a "new perspective on Paul" to understand Christianity as more compatible with Judaism. His contribution should be recognized especially in terms of theologically articulating ecumenical ground between Judaism and Christianity. Having said that, however, some of his arguments are questionable. In the scope of the Antioch incident, two weaknesses are notable.

First, one of his presuppositions that Jews' table-fellowship with gentiles was permissible in the late second-temple period calls for re-examination, especially when we compare it with David Kraemer's recent work on the topic.²⁰⁴ In *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages*, Kraemer, an expert in the social and religious history of Jews in late antiquity, presents a history of relations between Jewish eating practices and Jewish identity. In the third chapter that covers the second temple period, Kraemer makes two interesting points:

- In the second temple period, the type of food should not be understood separately from the type of people (gentiles or Jews). Unlike the issue dominant in the biblical period, that is, the type of food, an emerging idea in the second temple period is "the food of gentiles is defiling or disgusting merely because it

for the study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

204. Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages*, 28.

is their food--because they have prepared it or served it."²⁰⁵ That is to say, regardless of the type of food, when the food was of a gentile, its consumption was considered as an offense to Jewish dietary rule. Kraemer explains that this strict application emerged because of the crisis of Jewish identity: "Their setting, therefore, is a territory with an increasingly significant Hellenistic presence, where "foreign" (= non-Jewish) populations are more and more present and inherited Jewish identities are regularly challenged."²⁰⁶ In short, his research infers that mixed table-fellowship of Jews with gentiles was still problematic in the first century.

- Kraemer, however, cautions against judging the actual consequences of these developments, since there would be a gap between literary evidence and reality: "We can have no idea of how widely these new restrictions were observed."²⁰⁷

Although we consider Kraemer's call for a caution, and we consider the fact that the sources that Kraemer used are from the second century BCE,²⁰⁸ it is reasonable to assume that the avoidance of social relationship with gentiles persists to the first century CE, as far as the crisis of identity persists. Thus, Kraemer's study leads us to re-examine Dunn's presupposition that the issue in the Antioch incident was solely of the crisis of the type of

205. Ibid., 28.

206. Ibid., 29.

207. Ibid., 29.

208. For examples, Judith, Jubilees, Tobit, and Daniel.

food separately from the crisis of the type of eaters.

Another weakness of Dunn's interpretation of the Antioch incident is that his hypothesis does not explain the withdrawal of Peter and his Jewish companions. Dunn suggests six possible scenarios, but, as he admits, none of them is satisfactory.²⁰⁹ Dunn begins with leading questions:

The leading questions can be posed thus: What did the table-fellowship at Antioch involve *prior* to the coming of the men from James? And what would have been required of the gentile believers if the table-fellowship was to be resumed after the initial disruption caused by the withdrawal of Peter and the others?²¹⁰

Although these questions are appropriate to understand the situation, he drops out one crucial question in his list of initial questions: why did Peter and the others withdraw or what would have been required of Peter and the others if the table-fellowship was to be resumed? This question should be at the first place in the question list, because the withdrawal of Peter and the others was *the* problem of the incident. This misstep is the result of his presupposition discussed above that, in the first century CE, a mixed table-fellowship of Jews with gentiles was not scandalous at all. With this presupposition, Dunn eliminates the possibility that the mixed table-fellowship would be the problem. But, any hypothesis that cannot explain the withdrawal of Peter and the others needs to be reconsidered.

209. Dunn, "Incident at Antioch", 34ff.

210. Ibid., 25.

Philip Esler's Social Scientific Approach

Esler responds in his *Galatians* to these two weaknesses of Dunn. Reviewing the discussions of Sanders and Dunn, Esler defends his earlier view that Jews and gentiles did not have full table-fellowship in the first century.²¹¹ Based on this intermediate conclusion, Esler interprets the Antioch incident in the framework of "social change" that happened in the midst of building up a new Christian identity. In *Galatians*, Esler uses social scientific methods, especially social identity theory and Mediterranean cultural anthropology, to interpret the related literary sources, giving fresh insights to understand the focal quality of the table-fellowship in Antioch and the associated theological rhetoric of justification by faith.

Esler's criticism of Dunn begins by paying attention to the fact that Dunn conclusion that Jews ate together with gentiles in the first century is not based on direct literary evidence that witnesses mixed table-fellowship, but based on the literary evidence that infers "a considerable social intercourse" between Jews and gentiles.²¹² Then, Esler questions the legitimacy of this deduction from "social intercourse" to "table-fellowship."²¹³ To answer this question, Esler depends on Fredrik Barth, an

211. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 71ff.

212. Cf. Dunn, "Incident at Antioch", 22-3.

213. Philip Francis Esler, *Galatians*, New Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1998), 88, 99.

anthropologist, whose works made significant contribution to group (especially ethnic) identity theory.²¹⁴ According to Barth,²¹⁵ ethnic boundaries are not the product of cultural difference, but the product of social differentiation. And social differentiation presupposes two sets of boundary-maintaining dynamics, prescriptions and proscriptions:

Stable inter-ethnic relations presuppose . . . a set of prescriptions governing situations of contact, and allowing for articulation in some sectors or domains of activity, and a set of proscriptions on social situations preventing inter-ethnic interaction in other sectors, and thus insulating parts of the cultures from confrontation and modification. (Barth 1969, 16)²¹⁶

The relevance of this theory to Esler is that there are two independent governing rules, permissions and prohibitions, to maintain identity, and that a change in one area does not necessarily lead to a change in the other area.²¹⁷ Esler places "social intercourse," i.e., certain trading and social links, in the prescriptions and "intimate table-fellowship" in the proscriptions respectively, and argues that Dunn's hypothesis is faulty because it is based on the misconception that "if an ethnic group has interactions with outsiders in some

214. Esp., Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget Allen & Unwin, 1969), 9-38.

215. Followed is based on Esler's summary of Barth: Esler, *Galatians*, 78ff.

216. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 81.

217. *Ibid.*, 88:

Prescriptions and proscriptions coexist simultaneously; the former do not lead to a relaxation of the latter . . . The point is that one cannot argue from social interaction in one area to a breakdown of proscription in another. It is necessary to determine in any particular setting what was proscribed and what permitted on the evidence available.

areas it will proceed to do so in others."²¹⁸ In this way, Esler undermines the legitimacy of Dunn's hypothesis.

Thus, we have two opposite hypotheses before us and are forced to choose one as more presumable: Dunn supposes mixed table fellowship permissible whereas Esler supposes it intolerable. Kraemer's study confirms Esler's: it implies that the institution of Jewish eating regulations in the late second temple period was the crucial measurement to avoid assimilation and maintain the ethnic identity in the midst of a hostile gentile environment. As I mentioned above, we do not have any evidence that the hostility was significantly alleviated in the first century. An abundance of literary evidence analyzed by Esler and Kraemer combined with Barth's identity theory conclusively gives weight to Esler's position that, in the first century, Jews eating with gentiles was still scandalous. In relation to the current topic of the Antioch incident, this conclusion revives the traditional view that I cited from Snee: at stake in the Antioch incident was mixed table-fellowship between Jews and gentiles. In this view, the reason of Peter's withdrawal was not elusive: Peter and his Jewish companions' withdrew from the mixed table fellowship with gentiles because the mixed table fellowship was still scandalous.

Esler's study is more than criticism of Dunn. Esler's social scientific analysis shed light on Galatians, especially on the Antioch incident defining the nature of the incident in sociological terms. Esler uses Henry Tajfel's social identity theory to explain possible

218. Ibid., 82, 99.

social dynamics of the churches in Antioch and Galatian.²¹⁹ After affirming that Tajfel's theory is applicable to Mediterranean society, Esler lists two possible movements that group members of a lower status (Paul and the Christ-followers) in relation to a group of a higher status (Jews and gentiles) can take: "social mobility" and "social change."²²⁰

The former refers to a movement from lower to higher status: lower group members "simply leave their group and join the other." The latter refers to a movement that group members of a lower status change their group to "acquire a more positive social identity in relation to the higher group." This movement supposes that a movement from lower to higher is impossible because the intergroup boundaries are rigid and impermeable.

Between these two completely different social dynamics, the latter is found in the Antioch incident. Paul and the Christ-followers constituted a group of a lower status in relation both to Jews in the church and to gentiles in the society. As a group located in-between Jews and gentiles, they faced external and internal challenges: externally they faced pressures from both Jewish and gentile sides to clarify their identity by being

219. Cited works of Tajfel include: Henri Tajfel, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1986); Henri Tajfel, "Social Stereotypes and Social Groups," in *Intergroup Behavior*, ed. John C. Turner and Howard Giles (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, European Monographs in Social Psychology, vol. 14 (London: Academic Press, 1978); Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London: Routledge, 1988).

220. Esler, *Galatians*, 49-57.

circumcised or participating in various forms of idolatry; and internally they faced considerable tension because they were recruited from both Jewish and gentile sides--they were ready to cross back to their original groups. In the incident at Antioch, their relationship with Jews was at stake. Jewish church leaders, who were in higher status in the church, asked the gentile Christians to become Jews first by being circumcised. If they did not, those from James would not agree to the mixed table-fellowship between Jews and gentiles.²²¹ In this situation, if the gentiles were circumcised to gain the equal status of Jewish Christians, that would have been a case of "social mobility."²²² For Paul and his gentile Christians, however, that was not an option, because giving up mixed table fellowship meant to give up their Christian identity.²²³ Instead, they chose "social change" by adapting strategies to form "a new social and religious entity," or a third independent identity other than Jews or gentiles.²²⁴ Esler argues that, for Paul, mixed table-fellowship was not a favored option that he chose out of many different scribal opinions, but "a central feature of the gospel he preached"²²⁵ Again, for Paul, giving up

221. Esler offers a possible reason that James and John changed their attitude from the agreement of the Jerusalem council that the Judaizing Jews persuaded them to revoke the agreement after the council: Ibid., 136.

222. Ibid., 51.

223. Ibid., 91. If they followed the requirement for circumcision, that would be "defection *en masse*" in Tajfel's term, which means dissolution of the identity boundary.

224. Ibid., 89.

225. Ibid., 107.

mixed table-fellowship meant giving up his new identity as Christian. When those from James pressured Paul and the gentile Christians to be circumcised, and when Peter and the others withdrew from the table betraying the agreements of the Jerusalem council, Paul recognized that there was no permeability in the boundary between Jews and Christians. And it was probably there in the Antioch incident that Paul made his first step toward a third and separate social identity as Christian.²²⁶

Esler also explains the rhetorical role of justification by faith in this context. It was a means of "social competition" between Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders, who were of a higher status at that time. Social competition is a tactic to achieve "social change," occurring when "a subordinate group seeks to improve its position in relation to a dominant group with respect to scarce resources such as status."²²⁷ Esler interprets righteousness²²⁸ as "a privileged identity" based on his investigation of the Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible. Interestingly, according to Esler, Paul chose to use alternative language for righteousness, i.e., that of faith, love and sanctification, when the audience was only gentile as exemplified in 1 Thessalonians. Paul used the term of

226. We may explain the withdrawal of Peter and the others using the same sociological terms: Peter and the others did not concur with Paul in choosing "social change." They had a different evaluation about the social situation than Paul: they saw permeability in the boundary between Jews and Christians. So, when Paul confronted the pressure from those from James, Peter and the others chose to cross back to the other side of the boundary.

227. Ibid., 53-54, 169.

228. Esler's alternative translation for justification.

righteousness only when the audience was mixed of Jews and gentiles as exemplified in Galatians. This fact implies that Paul intentionally used the language of righteousness to cope with the problem caused by the coexistence of Jews and gentiles in the same community.²²⁹ What was Paul's strategy? In the Mediterranean social world, this notion of privileged identity could be regarded as a prestigious asset which required competition to obtain it.²³⁰ According to the definition of "social competition" above, if Paul's group won the competition for righteousness over the dominant group who possessed the privilege of righteousness, they could improve their status in relation to the dominant group. Esler explains:

In the face of solidly based claims that Israelite righteousness and the Mosaic law were inextricably connected, he proposes an alternative mode of access--from faith in Christ, not from the law. He already had a well-developed theology which we have seen in 1 Thessalonians, and now he seeks to re-work this in relation to the acquisition of righteousness.²³¹

Paul's use of justification in Gal 2:16 fits this explanation. In this verse, Paul begins his polemic with the familiar language of justification. But changing the path to obtain it from law to faith, Paul suppressed its previous connection with Jewish identity and re-connected it with Christian identity. Thus, justification by faith was used in the Antioch incident as a theological rhetoric that functioned as a means of "social competition" to

229. Ibid., 153-69.

230. Ibid., 169. See also Esler's explanation of competition for 'limited good' in the Mediterranean world, 48.

231. Ibid., 171.

achieve "social change." This confirms my hypothesis that Paul deployed the Antioch incident to promote Christian identity as a social religious entity that was distinct from Judaism.

The literary and historical analyses of the Antioch incident and the debate between Dunn and Esler elucidate the significance of the Antioch incident. First, the nature of the polemic in the Antioch incident was a conflict between a Pauline ideal of egalitarianism about ethnicity (neither Jews nor gentiles), which was manifested in mixed table fellowship, and the established dining code that regulated the relationship between Jews and gentiles. It was not about observance of the Jewish dietary law. Paul utilized this occasion for building up a Christian identity that was distinct from Judaism by advocating mixed table fellowship between Jews and gentiles and articulating his theological rhetoric 'justification by faith.' For Paul, transgressive commensality of the mixed congregation of Jews and gentiles was not just a way of dining: in such commensality, his egalitarian aspiration, rooted in Jesus' movement, was contextualized and manifested. It was an external identity marker of the Christ-followers. With this external identity marker, Paul also developed an internal identity marker, that is, his theological rhetoric 'justification by faith.' Formulating this concept out of justification by law, which was familiar to his Jewish contemporaries, Paul embarked on the competition for the status of God's people and the associated blessings.

**The Body of Christ and Transgressive Commensality between Free and Slave
(1 Cor 11:17-34)**

Thus far, we have seen in the Antioch incident that the Pauline ideal of egalitarianism conflicted with a dining code of Jewish culture. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians, we observe the same kind of conflicts occurred in the church of Corinth, yet in this case with the dining code of the Greco-Roman world. As announced in Gal 3:28, there was neither slave nor free, nor male and female in the Pauline ideal of the Christian community. This ideal, however, was not compatible with the Greco-Roman slavery system and gender hierarchy. We need to keep in mind that Christian gatherings were held in the patriarchal slave-holding household. It would be a naive assumption that early Christians swiftly adapted themselves to the Pauline ideal and immediately changed their social attitudes concerning gender and status so that no tension existed between the Pauline ideal church and the Greco-Roman household. That was not the case. Rather, the gap between the Pauline ideal and the social and cultural reality, especially of the Greco-Roman household in which the church was located, caused many problems. And, again, the problems were manifested at the dining table. Paul struggled to make his ideal a reality in the community, using the same strategy observed in Galatians. In 1 Corinthians, Paul used the theological rhetoric "the body of Christ" to differentiate the nature of the community from other "bodies" found in the contemporary world, and to advocate a transgressive commensality as a marker of Christian identity.

The Body of Christ

In the genuine Pauline letters, the term "the body of Christ" is attested only in 1 Corinthians (10:16, 12:27, cf. 11:27) and Romans (7:4, cf 12:5). Paul's first use of the term thus comes in 1 Corinthians where "the body of Christ" appears only in the literary context of the eucharistic meal.²³² It is significant that "the body of Christ" appears only in the parts of Paul's commentary on the eucharistic formula thus indicating that this term is used to highlight the nature of the community which had the eucharistic meal as its centering ritual.

Deciding the literary unit that is related to "the body of Christ" is important for further discussions. Some Interpreters suggest reading chapters 8-11 as one unit that has the topic of the eucharistic meal at its center.²³³ A close reading of 1 Corinthians, however, suggests that chapters 12-14 should also be included in this literary unit. Ostensibly the main subject of chapters 8-11 is the problems at the meal, whereas that of chapters 12-14 is spiritual gifts and worship. These two subjects are seemingly independent. Dennis Smith notes, "The question, then, whether the text indicates that these worship activities are still being undertaken at table," highlights an often ignored

232. To be sure, a "body" metaphor appears in 6:15-17. The connotation of the "body" in this passage, however, is different from that of "the body of Christ."

233. For example, Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 174.

fact that the eucharistic meal was the worship place for early Christians.²³⁴ As Smith concludes, it is reasonable to assume that, when Paul mentions "the church" or "the assembly" conducting worship activities in chapters 12-14, he is talking about "the same gathering that began with the meal in chapter 11."²³⁵ Therefore, "the body of Christ" plays a significant role throughout chapters 8-14, and the meaning of this term should primarily be understood in this literary unit.²³⁶

Paul's use of "the body of Christ" can be summarized as having two theological meanings. First, it means *koinonia* (union) with Christ. This theme is obvious especially in 10:16-17. Xavier Léon-Dufour points out the shift observed between these two verses:

The surprising thing about this short passage is the shift that occurs in the use of the word "body." In v. 16 the body is evidently the individual body of Jesus himself, the body which died and is now alive. In v. 17, however, it is "we, the multitude" who "are a single body," and it is difficult to argue that the "body" here is still the individual body of Jesus.²³⁷

234. Dennis Edwin Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 200.

235. Ibid., 200. Thiselton also sees chapters 8-14 as a coherent literary unit. He states, "It is very surprising how readily virtually all commentators appear to ignore the fundamental continuity between the arguments and themes of 8:1-11:1 and the application of these very same themes to issues concerning public or corporate worship in 11:2-14:40." Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 799.

236. This literary division is especially important for this study, because I will connect "the body of Christ" with the gender issue described in 14:34-40 in the next section.

237. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 212.

This shift illustrates the consequences of the *koinonia* through which Christians are incorporated into "the body of Christ." To be sure, this union does not mean the homoeopathic effect in the Dionysian mystery that can be summarized, "If you want to be like god you must eat god."²³⁸ Surely, Greek mysteries have the motifs of "eating the god" and of "union with the deity."²³⁹ And Paul seemingly borrowed the motif when he criticized *κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων* (partners with demons) by sharing the idols' table (10:20). Nonetheless, the Pauline motif of *koinonia* is distinct in that it does not mean an individual union, but the corporate union to be "the body of Christ."

Second, "the body of Christ" has more than just a religious spiritual dimension found in the union with Christ, but also a social dimension. Yung Suk Kim proposes this dimension of "the body of Christ" in *Christ's Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor*, arguing that "the body of Christ" is not a metaphor for theological unity and ecclesiastical concord--the traditional view that serves "ecclesial interests" and legitimizes "the powerful"-- but "a social site for realizing the ethical, holistic, and life-giving potentialities of Christ's life and death."²⁴⁰ His arguments are based on, first, his

238. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 277. See also *Ba.* 297-301.

239. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), esp., 111; Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 188ff.

240. Yung Suk Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 23-31. For the traditional view, see Margaret Mary Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY:

interpretation of "in Christ," a corresponding expression to "the body of Christ," and, second, his interpretation of the genitive in "the body of Christ." Kim interprets "in Christ" in Corinthians as a modal relation associated with "dying with Christ," opposing any interpretations that romanticize or spiritualize it.²⁴¹ For him, "dying with Christ" means "a realistic, radical sharing of the experiences of those who suffer like Christ."²⁴² Therefore, the one who is "in Christ"--and in "the body of Christ" alike--lives "a way of life manifested in and associated with Christ's life and sacrifice (Christ's dying)."²⁴³ In this interpretation, the egalitarian tradition that is rooted in Jesus' movement and kept alive in the Pauline ideal is highlighted. Likewise, Kim also suggests the syntactical interpretation of "the body of Christ" as to "participate in that body *by living like Christ*."²⁴⁴ This interpretation is possible, he suggests, when we take the genitive in "the body of Christ" as an attribute genitive, not as a possessive genitive (i.e, the body belonging to Christ).²⁴⁵ His interpretation is convincing, when we consider that the Pauline ideal, which is a contextualization of Jesus' egalitarian tradition, appears in

Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 20-64; Robert Horton Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987), 232.

241. Yung Suk Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor*, 36-8.

242. Ibid., 37.

243. Ibid., 37. Cf. 1 Cor 15:31.

244. Ibid., 66.

245. Ibid., 67.

combination with either "in Christ" or "the body of Christ."²⁴⁶ The social dimension is dominant in the Pauline ideal: it is about the social relations between different ethnic, gender and social statuses. Then, the associated concepts, that is, "the body of Christ," should be interpreted in a social dimension in addition to an ecclesiastical and theological dimension, as Kim proposes. Kim's interpretation of "the body of Christ" opens a possibility for understanding this term in a social dimension related to the social situation in the Corinthian church. My discussions below will be in concordance with his interpretation of "the body of Christ."

Identifying the Problem in 1 Cor 11:17-34

To identify the problem described in 1 Cor 11:17-34, many suggestions have been made. Among them, Theissen's suggestion is most convincing and accepted by many scholars.²⁴⁷ In *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, Theissen analyzes the stratum in the Corinthian church by the strong and the weak, and applies this analysis to the eucharistic meal.²⁴⁸ The wealthier members of the church are hosts of the gatherings and

246. Gal 3:28 is to describe the life "in Christ"; 1 Cor 12:13 is clearly associated with "the body of Christ."

247. For example, Peter Lampe, "The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross," *Interpretation* 48, no. 1 (1994): 36-49; John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 427.

248. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), chaps. 3-4.

probably provide the food for everyone. Like many other Greco-Roman meal practices in which dependents of a patron were invited, the hosts provide both a greater quantity and better quality of food and drink to their social equals than to participants of lower status.²⁴⁹ Theissen defines this problem as a conflict between “class-specific expectations on the one hand and on the other the norms of a community of love which encompasses men of different social strata.”²⁵⁰ Paul coped with the problem by moving the eucharistic meal to “the center to achieve a greater social integration.”²⁵¹ Although Theissen is not free from criticism, his hypothesis is still persuasive.²⁵² In the Greco-Roman banquet scene, discrimination of different classes or statuses could be expected without a doubt. But, despite his articulation of the possible scenarios, Theissen overlooked one essential element in his reconstruction, that is, the existence of slaves in the household church. If Theissen seriously considered this topic, his proposal would have been open to another possibility.

249. Ibid., 158.

250. Ibid., 162.

251. Ibid., 167.

252. For example, Smith submits a new proposal, disagreeing with Theissen. According to Smith, the problem in 1 Cor 11 is not class discrimination, but breach of the Greco-Roman banquet ideology marked by equal consumption. The problem with Smith's proposal is that Paul is portrayed as the one who was much more suited to the Greco-Roman society than many believe. Dennis Edwin Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 191ff. Hallback's understanding of the problem is in line with Smith. Geert Hallback, "Sacred Meal and Sacred Meeting: Paul's Argument in 1 Cor. 11.17-34," in *Meals in a Social Context*, 167-76.

My proposal for defining the problem reflected in 1 Cor 11:17-34 is that it is about the roles of slaves and free individuals at the Christian meals. There is no direct literary evidence for this hypothesis. Nevertheless, when well-established fragmentary facts are combined, it will serve as contextual evidence for my hypothesis:

1. The eucharistic meal was a full meal: This is the first thesis of McGowan's *Ascetic Eucharist*, as I mentioned in the introduction. A full meal required substantial preparation, especially when the number of guests was not small and when the meal was prepared in a kitchen devoid of our modern conveniences.²⁵³
2. Slaves prepared meals in the Greco-Roman world: Keith Bradley lists preparing food as well as attending to guests and waiting at table as one of common responsibilities of slaves. This responsibility was shared by the poor free of the Roman society and the freedmen who used to cook before being set free.²⁵⁴
3. Early Christians would gather at a household church; the Greco-Roman

253. "Owners of larger houses "deliberately segregated" cooking and dining, placing the smells, noises, and persons of the kitchen as many meters as possible from the dining rooms." Pedar William Foss, "Kitchens and Dining Rooms at Pompeii: The Spatial and Social Relationship of Cooking to Eating in the Roman Household" (Ph. D. diss., University of Michigan, 1994), 168, quoted in Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 199.

254. Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, Key Themes in Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 57ff. Bradley summarizes the general social condition of the slave: ". . . slaves were outsiders or marginal beings and that their marginality, continually reinforced by their rightlessness, contrasted very sharply with the centrality of those who were able to participate fully in human and civic affairs" (76). Also see my discussion about the role of slaves in the previous chapter.

household included slaves and children. Therefore, the household church included slaves too.²⁵⁵ In the Greco-Roman world, one household belonged to one family that worshipped together.²⁵⁶

4. Co-existence of Christian slaves with their Christian masters: Because Christian churches included entire households, slaves (and freed-slaves) co-existed with their Christian masters (and former-masters).²⁵⁷ The hierarchical structure of the masters' power and authority over their slaves remained a problem for the mixed congregations of slaves and masters.²⁵⁸

A combination of these four well-established pieces of information points out one

255. Aristotle's *Politics* states: "The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the smallest and primary parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children" (I.1253b), quoted in Schussler Fiorenza, "Praxis of Coequal Discipleship," 238. Numerous examples of metaphors and instructions of slaves reflect the existence of slaves in the household church in early Christianity. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 174-92. Two outstanding examples of the conversion of the whole household into Christianity are of Cornelius and Lydia in Acts 10 and 16. Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests*, 53-56.

256. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 82ff. Also see my discussion of the Greco-Roman household in the next chapter.

257. When slaves were set free by their masters, they became freed persons. But in reality, they were "neither totally free from the domination of nor equal in status to their patron [master]." They were still under the power of their masters: John K. Chow, "Patronage in Roman Corinth," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 120.

258. Wayne A Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 63-64.

possible alternative explanation about the problem reflected in 1 Cor 11:17-34. Before stating that, we need to clarify a couple of meanings of the words in v19, that is, αἰρέσεις and δόκιμοι. In interpreting these two words, the literary context is important: it is in the context of the eucharistic meal. First, let us consider the meaning of αἰρέσεις. In spite of this obvious literary context, interpreters tend to see the αἰρέσεις in v19 as related to the same problem as σχίσματα (divisions) and ἔριδες (quarreling) in the very beginning part of the letter (1:10-11). It is not probable, however, that αἰρέσεις in v19 mentions the same problems of σχίσματα and ἔριδες in 1:10-11. The latter denotes the problem of parties or cliques within the church, and is not mentioned again in the letter. Also interpreting it as making a reference to doctrinal or theological dissensions is not correct. From the literary context, we conjecture that αἰρέσεις in v19 refers to a problem at the meal table, and translate αἰρέσεις as either "division" or "distinction." To clarify that it is not the division mentioned in 1:10-11, I will translate it as "distinction," connoting an unfair treatment or role at the meal table. In the same line of argument, δόκιμοι should be understood in the context of the meal. Concerning the interpretation of δόκιμοι, Smith provides an important insight: δόκιμοι "derives its primary meaning from the politics of the table whereby rankings are to be assigned to those of higher status."²⁵⁹ From this hint, we may translate δόκιμοι as "esteemed" or "respected," those who would recline in a place of honor or in a higher place, or who were not supposed to

259. Dennis Edwin Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 197.

do any work for the meal because of their social status outside the church.²⁶⁰

Now, we may present an alternative understanding of the situation reflected in 1 Cor 11:17-34. The Corinthian church, like a typical Pauline church, included slaves and their master(s) in the congregation. According to Jesus' tradition and the Pauline ideal of egalitarian relationships between slaves and masters, they participated together in the eucharistic meal. The meal, however, needed to be prepared by somebody. According to their customary role in society, slaves prepared food in the kitchen, while "δóκιμοι" reclined in the dining room. Because of the number of guests and the style of dining (consisted of a course of food), the preparation and cooking might take a significant length of time. As a result of this distinction of the role, one party, who cooked in the kitchen, was hungry while the other was drunk. In this way, "δóκιμοι" made "τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας" disappointed (καταισχύνετε). The Lord's meal was in danger.

Facing this problem, Paul, as he did in Galatians, instructed the congregation with a practical solution and theological persuasions. The former was simple: "δóκιμοι" had to wait until those who were preparing the food came to recline or sit down. Therefore, in my proposal, the instruction of "wait" does not mean "wait" until everyone arrived at the household church, but "wait" until slaves or freed slaves came back to the dining room from the kitchen. The latter was a combination of the theological rhetoric of "the

260. Smith's final interpretation of δóκιμοι is different from mine: "The term, then, is being applied to the group that continues to cohere as a community though some have separated themselves." Ibid., 197.

body of Christ" and the tradition of Lord's supper. With "the body of Christ," Paul transferred the spatial sense of the eucharistic meal from the Greco-Roman household, where slaves worked and masters reclined, to the "body of Christ," where slaves and masters reclined together. This interpretation of the "body of Christ" as an alternative dining space to the slave-holding household is persuasive, when we pay attention to Paul's intensive use of οἰκοδομεῖ (building up) and its cognate verb in the current literary unit (i.e., 8:1, 10, 10:23, 14:4, 17). With "οἰκοδομεῖ," Paul emphasized that the "body of Christ" was not a static entity but something to be continuously built up like an οἶκος (house). The combined use of "οἰκοδομεῖ" with the "body of Christ" adds spatial overtones to the "body of Christ." For Paul, it was a place where the social distance disappeared: there was neither slave nor free. By quoting the tradition of the Lord's supper, Paul emphasized that there was only one master, Jesus Christ, in the church, and that all Christians were equally slaves of him. Therefore, if there was another master at the dining, it was not a κυριακὸν δεῖπνον (Lord's supper: 10:20). Moreover, by quoting the tradition that contained ἀνάμνησις (remembrance or memory), Paul reminded and re-emphasized the Jesus' movement in which his ideal was rooted.²⁶¹ With ἀνάμνησις in the eucharistic formula, Paul invited the Christ-followers in Corinth, especially the δόκιμοι, to recall and follow the life of Jesus, who showed example of being lowered to a

261. ἀνάμνησις is found only in 1 Cor and Luke: traditions in Matt, Mark and Didache do not have it. We do not necessarily assume that only one tradition was available to Paul; he might have chosen the quoted one out of the traditions available to him.

slave.²⁶² Thus, by quoting the eucharistic formula that emphasized ἀνάμνησις, and by emphasizing the nature of the eucharistic meal as the Lord's supper, Paul negated the social distinction between slave and free, and provided a theological principle to solve the problem reflected in 1 Cor 11:17-34.

262. For translating ἀνάμνησις as to recall, imitate, and follow, see the discussion on 1 Cor 4:16-17 in Boykin Sanders, "Imitating Paul: 1 Cor 4:16," *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 4 (1981): 353-63.

Chapter 6

Eating and Drinking as a Means of Generating Episcopal Power

In the primitive Church, there was one table, yet many myths around the table. To be sure, "one table" in this statement does not mean uniformity in the Dixian sense. As mentioned above in the introduction, there were many forms of tables according to the order, the elements and the meaning of the table. Interestingly, however, there was no schism about the form of the meal, until the movement from diversity to uniformity appeared in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. In his discussion on the causes of schism of the early church, S. L. Greenslade explains that the form of the liturgy was basically left to individuals, so that "At the heart of the life of worship, in the eucharistic liturgy, there was variety not only as between one rite and another but also within single rites"²⁶³ To be sure, we know that some early Christian writers such as Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria expressed their uncomfortable feelings about Encratites' ascetic abstinence from wine.²⁶⁴ We also know Cyprian's lengthy admonition to 'Aquarians'.²⁶⁵ But none of these tensions led to schisms at that time.²⁶⁶ 'Encratites' and 'Aquarians' were

263. S. L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church*, Edward Cadbury Lectures, 1949-50 (London: SCM Press, 1953), 93ff.

264. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1. 28. 1; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2. 2.

265. Cyprian, *Ep.* 62.

266. The fourth century writer Basil of Caesarea treated them as schismatic, yet

surely within the church as fellow Christians of these writers and some of them were even colleague bishops, as indicated in Cyprian's writing.²⁶⁷ From this observation, we learn that the early Christians were very flexible and generous about ritual differences.

But when it comes to beliefs and worldviews of participants in the table, generosity turned into hostility. Christians began to separate into distinct groups according to what kinds of beliefs and worldviews they had. And they manifested their separations through the issue of with whom they ate. Now different myths collided over the table. The issue of "who ate the eucharistic meal with whom" became a manifestation of confessional identity. In the midst of this process, certain Christian groups generated the ecclesiastical power to control the matter of "who ate with whom." In the early stages of Christianity where no theologian *per se*, but the 'cultic' official, undertook leadership roles, and where the eucharistic meal was one single regular cultic practice for Christians, their power-generating strategy was effective.

In this chapter, we will see how episcopal authority was generated in relation to eating and drinking in early Christianity. Before proceeding, one note should be made. In the following chapters, the terms 'orthodox' and 'heretic' will be frequently used. I am aware that using such terms is anachronistic, since there was no 'orthodoxy' or 'heresy' in the modern sense before the ecumenical councils in the fourth century. For the sake of

not heretical. Basil, *Ep.* 188. 1.

267. Cyprian, *Ep.* 62. 1.

convenience, however, I will use these terms. Single quotation marks will be used for these terms to denote that I use 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy', without my own theological judgment, to describe those who came to be 'within' and 'without' the 'catholic' church.

One Ritual, Many Myths

In the early stages of the formation of Christianity, the main issue was not Christology. It was more about cosmology and theology: in other words, it was about immanence (cosmology) and transcendence (theology). Examples of 'heretics' in this stage were Marcionites, Docetics, and Gnostics.²⁶⁸ Each had their own peculiar belief and system, yet one common tendency of all of these was their bias for transcendence over immanence. Gnostics were eminent in this regard. For some Gnostics, i.e., Sethian and Valentinian Gnostics, the world was mistakenly created by the inferior god or Demiurge. Human beings were alien to this world, and their ultimate goal was to return to their divine origin. Marcionites, although it is still controversial whether they should be categorized as a Gnostic group,²⁶⁹ shared one typical Gnostic thought: the world was evil and created by the inferior God, the God of the Old Testament. Docetics believed that Jesus' incarnation was merely a transfiguration or metamorphosis. They could not

268. I did not include Montanism in this list, since it was not as influential as other groups, and it was not labelled as 'heresy' by the 'orthodox' church.

269. Gerhard May, "Marcion in Contemporary Views: Results and Open Questions," in *Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Schism in Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1993).

accept that Jesus actually took material substance in his incarnation, since 'material' had earthly, not heavenly, connotations in their system of thought. All these 'heretical' groups commonly had very negative attitudes towards 'this world.'

The conflicts between 'heretic' and 'orthodox' Christians can be understood as a crash between two unreconcilable worldviews, Hellenistic dualism on one hand and Semitic monism on the other hand. Generally speaking, the former understood the world within the framework of Greek metaphysics, especially Middle Platonism. In this worldview, the created world was merely a mirror of heavenly Ideas.²⁷⁰ Matter existed before the creation in the form of chaos, and the creator simply gave it order so that the Cosmos evolved out of Chaos.²⁷¹ This cosmology implied that God did not fully enjoy the omnipotence and sovereignty that were peculiar features of the biblical God.²⁷² For 'orthodox' Christians, this kind of cosmology was hard to accept, since they did not have such a dualistic worldview and their theology was deeply rooted in their sacred scripture, rather than in philosophical metaphysics. These scriptures taught them that God "created the heavens and the earth" and sustained them in his goodness and wisdom. These two sets of cosmology and theology were already not easily compatible, yet some Gnostics made the situation worse. Gnostics in the first and second centuries were under the

270. Plato, *Tim.* 29. B.

271. Plato, *Tim.* 30. B.

272. Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of "Creation Out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1-5.

strong influence of Middle Platonism. But some of them did not just repeat what their contemporary philosophers taught. They added contemptuous notations about the creator and the created world, interpreting them as evil and demonic.²⁷³ This was a big step out of genuine Middle Platonism: in the dualism of Middle Platonism, spirit and matter, the invisible and the visible contrasted, yet not in an antagonistic manner. But in certain forms of Gnosticism, they became "two antagonistic forces which stand over against each other in almost total alienation."²⁷⁴ A few 'orthodox' thinkers attempted to syncretize their beliefs with Middle Platonism and interpret their traditions through it,²⁷⁵ but, for some Gnostics, there was only antagonism.

This cosmological-theological difference was fully reflected in their ways of thinking, teaching and myth-making. Simply speaking, some Gnostic Christians had a mythological orientation, putting an emphasis on transcendence, whereas 'orthodox' Christians had a historical orientation, putting emphasis on immanence. For the latter, the most illustrative example is *Song of the Sea* in Exod 15:1-21.²⁷⁶ In this biblical poem,

273. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 245-54.

274. Ibid., 246.

275. As seen in the examples of Philo, Justin Martyr, Aristides, Athenagoras, and Hermogenes. See May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 9-22, 118-47.

276. This example would be chronically somewhat remote to explain the thoughts of the first and second century 'orthodox' Christians. But considering that, unlike their opponents whose ultimate goal was liberation from the Old Testament God, the 'orthodox' Christians attempted to understand their identity within the framework of salvation history that began in as remote as God's creation, this example from the Old Testament is still valid to understand the thoughts of the first and second century

Yahweh is described as a mighty storm-god who fights against the enemies of Israel through his power to control the sea.²⁷⁷ The combat with his enemies results in the establishment of Yahweh's sanctuary.²⁷⁸ As Patrick Miller and Alberto Green point out, this poem has a very familiar mythical pattern as seen in Canaanite Baal epics:²⁷⁹ "the combat of the divine warrior and his victory at the Sea, the building of a sanctuary on the mount of inheritance, and the god's manifestation of eternal kingship."²⁸⁰ What we acknowledge with this example is the important alteration which was made when the Canaanite Baal myth was adapted by the Israelites: the Baal myth had only a cosmic scope, whereas the Yahwistic poet used the same mythical theme but described it through *historical* events. The significance is that this is not an isolated case, but an example of

'orthodox' Christians.

277. Exod 15:8-10 reads:

At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

278. Exod 15: 17 reads:

You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O LORD, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands have established.

279. Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 113-17; Alberto Ravinell Whitney Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 258-75.

280. Patrick D. Miller, *Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 117.

the pattern of Hebrew myth-making.²⁸¹ The 'orthodox' Christians followed this pattern in making Christ-myths. Although there were a variety of writers producing a variety of Christ-myths, they were common in orienting the historical event of Jesus as the foundation of their myths.²⁸² Ignatius' christological comment in his letter to the Trallians well illustrates this aspect of 'orthodox' Christian myth-making:

Be deaf, therefore, whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, who was the son of Mary; who really was born, who both ate and drank; who really was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who really was crucified and died while those in heaven and on earth and under the earth looked on; who, moreover, really was raised from the dead when his Father raised him up, who--his Father, that is--in the same way will likewise also raise us up in Christ Jesus who believe in him, apart from whom we have no true life.²⁸³

'Orthodox' Christians stood in history. Furthermore, they were not just grounded in the past events of Jesus' life, but were also very sensitive and attentive to practical social concerns and interests in an extraordinary period of social and cultural change, and

281. For more examples, see Ibid., 280. Also cf. Arvid Schou Kapelrud, *The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the Old Testament* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 54-56.

282. For more about understanding Christian myth-making for formation of Christianity, see Burton L. Mack, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* (New York: Continuum, 2001); John Kenneth Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew*, *Studies of the New Testament and Its World* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2005); also, Theissen's understanding of the formation of Christianity through 'cultural sign system' is not different from 'myth-making.' Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000). For historical orientation of early Christians, see W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 306.

283. Ign. *Trall.* 9.

integrated them into their myths. Burton Mack notes, "Early Christian mythmaking was neither pure 'speculation' nor simply the elaboration of a 'received tradition.' In each case the social reasons and the effect of imagining a mythic configuration need to be determined (emphasis mine)."²⁸⁴ In this sense, their myths, although telling about the transcendent figure Christ, were deeply rooted in the ground of immanent reality.

Contrarily, some Gnostic Christians took an opposite path in making their myths. Their world-denying dualism and the denigration of the creator-God might have originated simply from Platonic influence or from their disappointment in Jewish apocalyptic hopes through the experiences of the two destructions of Jerusalem.²⁸⁵ We do not know the reason for sure. Yet, it is clear from their elusively complicated mythological accounts that their myth making was not anchored in immanent reality.

Gerhard May well summarizes this phenomenon:

Yet their theological interest is wholly directed to the other-worldly reality which is mirrored in this world. The world is seen, just as in the Bible, as a great allegory of the figures and events of the pleroma, and salvation consists in liberation from the earthly-material world. Everything historical is merely superficial, and its deeper meaning is revealed to the pneumatic.²⁸⁶

Besides the other-worldly orientation, another feature of Gnostic myth making that was

284. Mack, *Christian Myth*, 107. For the details of "social reasons" to respond to their times in early Christian myth making, see *Ibid.*, 101-25.

285. The latter assumption is of Grant. Robert McQueen Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 27. See also Carl B. Smith, *No Longer Jews: The Search for Gnostic Origins* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

286. May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 114.

not acceptable to 'orthodox' Christians was the endless emanation of aeons in their myths. For 'orthodox' Christians, there was only one emanation from God, Jesus the only begotten son. For them, endless emanations of aeons in the 'fables' of their suspicious fellows sounded ridiculous and unacceptable. So, Irenaeus complained that they "sprung up and shot out of the ground like mushrooms" and listed more than 40 names of aeons that were supposed to be emanated from Barbelo to the First Ruler, who said "I am a jealous God, there is no one besides me."²⁸⁷ The problem of these free emanations in this mythological system was that, even Jesus, the anchor point of 'orthodox' Christians, was treated as simply one aeon and "as a mere copy of the fate of Sophia."²⁸⁸

Conflicts over the Table

These conflictual systems of thought shed light on the differences in the eucharistic theologies of 'orthodox' Christians and Gnostic Christians, whose cultic practices and thoughts are revealed in the *Gospel of Philip*. In light of the macro-investigation performed above, now we will see the details of the eucharistic theologies of both sides. But before elaborating the differences, let us see the commonality first.

287. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 29. For a genealogy of aeons from the Gnostic side, see *The Apocryphon of John*; for scholastic survey on this topic, see A. H. B Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism*, T & T Clark Academic Paperbacks (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), chap 2, esp., the genealogical chart, 55.

288. May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 115.

Both Gnostics and 'orthodox' Christians had the notion that between transcendence and immanence there lay a great gulf almost impossible to bridge. The divine was not reachable for human beings. So, for Gnostics, communion with the aeon(s) was the way to cross the gulf.²⁸⁹ Basically the theological implication of the eucharistic meal, for both sides, was about bridging the two realms. After this commonality, however, the Gnostic and the 'orthodox' provided different solutions. In short, for 'orthodox' Christians, there was only one aeon, that is, Jesus Christ. Through his incarnation the communion occurred in the sphere of immanence and, because he was God, the communion itself was the final destination.²⁹⁰ Contrarily, for Gnostic Christians, there were plural aeons for the communion and the communion was a means to reach to the sphere of transcendence, to the One.

The eucharistic ideas of 'orthodox' Christians can be understood in this big picture. It is not my place to discuss the eucharistic theology in full depth, but some of the eucharistic ideas that are relevant to this work must be mentioned. The first feature of the 'orthodox' is an affirmation of the goodness of creation. According to Justin Martyr, God's creation was "of His goodness" and "for the people's sake"²⁹¹; God's creation was under "the divine law" and showed God's care for the people.²⁹² Irenaeus clearly related

289. Justin, *Dial.* 56. 1, 60. 2, 127. 2f; Ign. *Pol.* 3. 2.

290. This insight from May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 126-7.

291. Justin, 1 *Apol.* 10.

292. Justin, 2 *Apol.* 5.

this goodness of creation to the eucharistic meal: "He took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks, and said, 'This is My body.' And the cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong . . . "²⁹³ And again:

For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.²⁹⁴

Thus, the created world was affirmed as good, not denigrated, and the eucharistic communion was basically an event belonging to 'this world.' The second feature of the 'orthodox' eucharistic ideas was the emphasis on a God-Man Christology. Jesus was truly incarnated in flesh, yet that Christ was God. Ignatius uttered that Christ was "our God."²⁹⁵ And alluded that Christ who suffered in the flesh was God in these expressions: "blood of God," and "suffering of my God."²⁹⁶ Although he did not articulate how the divine and the human joined in Christ, this christological notion, i.e., Christ was God, was clearly manifested in these verses. The significance is that, in this Christology, communion with Christ was not discernible from union in God. So, the eucharistic

293. Irenaeus, *Haer.* IV. 17. 5.

294. Irenaeus, *Haer.* IV. 18. 5. This idea also clearly manifests in the eucharistic prayer in *Didache*: "You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake, and gave food and drink to men to enjoy, that they might give you thanks, but to us you have graciously given spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your servant." (10. 3)

295. Ign. *Eph.* 18. 2; cf. 7. 2.

296. Ign. *Eph.* 1. 1; *Rom.* 6. 3.

communion with Christ was the ultimate union, not a means for a higher union. This feature was enhanced by the result of the union: the partaker of the communion would receive immortality, for the eucharistic bread was the "bread of immortality" and the "medicine of immortality."²⁹⁷ As Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, the participant in his flesh would also be raised.²⁹⁸

The third and the most important feature of 'orthodox' eucharistic ideas was related to the crisis caused by delay of the parousia. The first Christians expected that the Christ, who was the 'suffering servant' in the first coming, would immediately come again as 'the cosmic redeemer.' This eschatological hope was best expressed in "Maranatha!", the triumphal ending of the eucharistic prayer in the *Didache*.²⁹⁹ This eschatological expectation, however, was not fulfilled and resulted in a crisis in the church. In second century Christianity, this future eschatology based on Jewish apocalyptic hope was still lingering, though it gradually declined and fossilized in the liturgy,³⁰⁰ and shifted to the idea of 'individual' salvation. This transition was slow and gradual so that, in the second century church, both were present, making the tension

297. Irenaeus, *Haer.* IV. 38. 1; Ign. *Eph.* 20. 2.

298. Ign. *Smyrn.* 7. 1.

299. *Did.* 10. 6: "May grace come, and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If anyone is holy, let him come, If anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha! Amen."

300. This example in *Didache* is the only witness of *maranatha* in the entire Apostolic Fathers and Church Fathers. To be sure, there is another witness in Tertullian, yet as in '*anathema maranatha*,' which is a totally different context.

between "already" and "not yet" in the coming of Christ. Contemporary Christian thinkers needed to solve the tension.

Justin provided hints of how the church would respond to this crisis. Justin clearly described his expectation of the second coming of Christ.³⁰¹ Yet, at the same time, he also accepted a delayed parousia. He explained to the non-Christians why the parousia had been delayed: "for the sake of the human race for he foreknows that there are some yet to be saved by repentance, even perhaps some not yet born" and "because of the seed of the Christians, who know that they are the cause of preservation in nature."³⁰² Here Justin presented Christians as Cicero's *logoi spermatikoi*, who had "seeds" of the virtues, which were "brought to perfection by morals and right behavior."³⁰³ We can find in this remark that Justin's eschatology shifted from 'apocalyptic' to 'realized.' The significance of it is that, in this eschatology-ecclesiology, Justin presented the Church (i.e., Christians) as the solution for the tension between the first coming of the historical Jesus and the second coming of the cosmic Christ. In the Church, which was established by Jesus at the first coming, the *parousia* was already present. The physical body of the historical Jesus, who died and rose again, became the mystical body, that is, the

301. *Dial.* 32. 2-3.

302. 1 *Apol.* 28. 2; 2 *Apol.* 7. 1.

303. Justin, *The First and Second Apologies*, trans. Loslie W. Bernard, *Ancient Christian Writers*, no. 56 (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 206.

Church.³⁰⁴ And, the eucharistic meal at the heart of Christian gatherings had the same theological meaning, since the mystical body was also the eucharistic body. So, Jaroslav Pelikan remarks:

The coming of Christ was "already" and "not yet": he had come already in the incarnation, and on the basis of the incarnation would come in the Eucharist; he had come already in the Eucharist, and would come at the last in the new cup that he would drink with them in his Father's kingdom.³⁰⁵

The parousia was already realized in those who partook in the eucharistic meal, since their body and blood was united with the body and blood of Christ, who was the 'realized' *parousia*.³⁰⁶ Thus, for 'orthodox' Christians, the eucharistic meal was an 'immanent' event, based on the true and full incarnation of God. For them, God Himself descended to cross the gulf between the divine and the humanity for the sake of 'His created world.' By eating and drinking at His table, Christians participated in this transcendent presence in 'this world.'

Contrary to these 'orthodox' eucharistic ideas, some Gnostics showed a very opposite, 'that-world' oriented eucharistic ideas. The *Gos. Phil.*, a Valentinian treatise, provides Gnostic traditions that help us understand their sacrament system. From the

304. 2 *Clem.* 14.

305. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 126.

306. For example, Irenaeus, *Haer.* IV. 18. 5. Also see Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, 23-30.

Gos. Phil., as well as heresiologists' witnesses,³⁰⁷ we find that Valentinian Gnostics were not just a 'school' but a 'church' as well, who practiced their own sacraments.

Furthermore, it tells us that the form and order of the eucharistic meal of the Valentinian Gnostics, who also used bread and a mixed cup of wine and water, was remarkably similar with that of the 'orthodox' church. In fact, Irenaeus insisted that most Christians could not differentiate between the two.³⁰⁸ Then, what was the peculiarity of the Gnostic sacrament system found in the *Gos. Phil.*? The first difference is the mythological language embedded in the sacraments, as I mentioned above. For the community of the *Gos. Phil.*, the sacrament system of 'orthodox' Christians was like "a donkey turning a millstone" that was stupid and in vain,³⁰⁹ since they were practicing 'sacraments' without knowing the secret *gnosis* for redemption of souls. For them, there were two spheres of worlds, one was "unreal [false]" and deceitful and the other was "superior to the world" and "eternal."³¹⁰ The former was this world and the latter was unknown to this world, since "they would not be uttered on any occasion in the world."³¹¹ The ultimate goal of those who were in this world was "in the eternal realm,"³¹² leaving "this world" that

307. For example, Irenaeus, *Haer.* I. 13. 2.

308. Ibid., Praefatio, 1-2.

309. *Gos. Phil.* 63. 11f.

310. Ibid., 53. 35; 53. 21-22.

311. Ibid., 54. 3; 61. 20-34.

312. Ibid., 54. 4.

"came into being through transgression."³¹³ Jesus came to this world for this purpose, to save those who were like "a pearl in the mud,"³¹⁴ and to bring back "those who had entered [this world]."³¹⁵ This was the *gnosis* known to a very limited group of people.

This elitism of the Gnostic, based on a very rigid hierarchical anthropology, resulted in the second feature of the Gnostic sacrament, that is, sacramental determinism. Some Gnostics liked to divide humanity according to their ontological status. Sethian Gnostics divided humanity into three categories, i.e., the immortal race of Seth, the late repenters and outsiders. And the Valentinians also used a trifold category to divide humanity that "corresponds to the elements of the individual: spiritual (corresponding to reason or the mind), psychic, and material (fleshly)."³¹⁶ PHEME PERKINS summarizes this anthropology:

The spiritual humans were immediately drawn to gnosis. The material humans never could be enlightened. The psychic humans, apparently representative of the orthodox Christians among whom Valentinian Gnostics lived, were hesitant. They had to rely on faith and sacraments. They would be assigned a lesser place in the heavenly world than that of the Gnostics.³¹⁷

Thus, in these hierarchical systems, sacraments were necessary for only a certain class of

313. Ibid., 65. 27; 75. 1.

314. Ibid., 62. 17f.

315. Ibid., 68. 20.

316. PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 44-45.

317. Ibid., 45.

people, i.e., the psychic. Neither the pneumatic nor the material people needed them, since the former could be redeemed without sacraments, and the latter could not be redeemed even with sacraments. So, the *Gos. Phil.* taught:

Those who inherit dead things are also dead, and what they inherit are dead things. Those who inherit the living are alive and they inherit both the living and the things that are dead. Dead things inherit nothing, for how could a dead thing inherit anything? If a dead person inherits the living, that person will not die, but rather will greatly live. A gentile does not die, for the gentile has never become alive so as to die. One who has believed in the truth has become alive; and this person runs the risk of dying, because of being alive.³¹⁸

Although a piece of information from Irenaeus alluded that Gnostics had a more egalitarian model of organization by drawing lots,³¹⁹ that custom was only for the pneumatic humans and should be understood within a fixed division of human classes. We have no further information about what kind of people belonged to what category. But this elitism precluded a certain form of exclusivism in their sacraments.

Another difference in the sacrament system was the place and role of the eucharistic meal. Unlike the 'orthodox' system, the *Gos. Phil.* had five sacraments³²⁰: "The Lord [did] all things by means of a mystery: baptism, chrism, eucharist, ransom,

318. *Gos. Phil.* 52. 6-18; and also 69. 1-3, "Animals have no bridal bedroom, nor do slaves or defiled women. Rather, free men and virgins have one."

319. Irenaeus, *Haer.* I. 13. 4.

320. For outline of five sacraments, see Eric Segelberg, "The Coptic-Gnostic Gospel According to Philip and Its Sacramental System," *Numen* 7, no. 2 (1960): 189-200. The system of five sacraments seems not to be peculiar to *Gos. Phil.* *Gos. Thom.* seems to also have the five sacraments: "Indeed, you have five trees in paradise, which do not move in summer or winter, and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever is acquainted with them will not taste death" (*Gos. Thom.* 36. 21-4).

and bridal chamber."³²¹ Among these five, the eucharistic meal was placed in the third place, after 'ransom' and 'bridal chamber.' Unlike the 'orthodox' Christians who valued the eucharistic meal as the ultimate sacrament, the *Gos. Phil.* appreciated the bridal-chamber above all other sacraments; it was the supreme *mysterion*:

Truth did not come to the world nakedly; rather, it came in prototypes and images: the world will not accept it in any other form. Rebirth exists along with an image of rebirth: by means of this image one must be truly reborn. Which image? Resurrection. And image must arise by means of image. By means of this image, the bridal chamber and the image must embark upon the realm of truth, that is, embark upon the return. Not only must those who produce the names of father, son, and holy spirit do so, but also (those who) have acquired these.³²²

If the female had not separated from the male, she and the male would not die. That being's separation became the source of death. The anointed (Christ) came to rectify the separation that had been present since the beginning and join the two; and to give life unto those who had died by separation and join them together. Now, a woman joins with her husband in the bridal bedroom and those who have joined in the bridal bedroom will not separate.³²³

The resurrection comes about in the restoration of the unity of the sexes through the sacrament of the bridal-chamber, and through this sacrament one will "embark upon the realm of truth, that is, embark upon the return" in order to enter into the ultimate union. Those who enter into this union experience the transition from being a Christian to becoming Christ.³²⁴ This high esteem of the bridal chamber meant, in other words, that

321. *Gos. Phil.* 67. 27.

322. *Ibid.*, 67. 9-21.

323. *Ibid.*, 70. 9-19.

324. *Ibid.*, 67. 26. See also Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, "A Cult-Mystery in 'The Gospel of Philip,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 4 (1980): 569-81. "The task for the believer is to create the aeon in this material world. Cultic means are required to

the eucharistic meal was not regarded as *the* ultimate sacrament in the Gnostic system. Rather, entering the bridal chamber was "an eminent means of sanctification,"³²⁵ or "a *divinizing* mechanism."³²⁶ To be sure, the *Gos. Phil.* too said that Jesus "brought bread from heaven so that human beings might be fed with the food of the human being."³²⁷ But, eating his flesh did not mean union with Christ as in the 'orthodox' eucharistic theology. It was more about "cloaking." According to the soteriological system of the *Gos. Phil.*, humans needed clothing on their body, which was invisible to the archons.³²⁸ By eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the "Perfect Man," who was Christ, humans "unclothed" human bodies and "re clothed" with Jesus' flesh.³²⁹ Three quotations from the *Gos. Phil.* clearly show this idea:

Certain persons are afraid that they may arise (from the dead) naked: therefore they want to arise in the flesh. And they do not know that those who wear the flesh are the ones who are naked. Those who [. . .] to divest themselves are not naked. "Flesh [and blood will not] inherit the kingdom [of god]." What is this flesh that will not inherit it? The one that we are wearing. And what, too, is this flesh that will inherit it? It is Jesus' flesh, along with his blood. Therefore he said, "He who does not eat my flesh and drink my blood does not have life within

achieve this: the bridal-chamber restores the unity of the sexes and heals the break between the human and the divine" (575).

325. Segelberg, "Coptic-Gnostic Gospel According to Philip and Its Sacramental System", 196.

326. April D. DeConick, "The True Mysteries: Sacramentalism in the 'Gospel of Philip,'" *Vigiliae Christianae* 55, no. 3 (2001): 241.

327. *Gos. Phil.* 55. 11.

328. *Ibid.*, 59. 3.

329. DeConick, "True Mysteries," 242.

him." What is meant by that? His "flesh" means the Word, and his "blood" means the holy spirit: whoever has received these has food, and has drink and *clothing*. (Emphasis mine)³³⁰

The forces do not see those who have put on the perfect light and cannot seize them. One will put on the light in a mystery, through the act of joining.³³¹

The perfect human being not only cannot be restrained, but also cannot be seen--, for if something is seen it will be restrained. In other words, not one can obtain this grace without putting on the perfect light [and] becoming, as well, perfect light. Whoever has [put it] on will go [. . .].³³²

This cloaking effect was the role of the eucharistic meal in the sacrament system of the *Gos. Phil.* was different from the 'orthodox' eucharistic meal.³³³ For 'orthodox' Christians, the eucharistic meal was the means for the ultimate union with God whereas, for 'Gnostic' Christians, it was one of the middle steps for the final sacramental union in the bridal chamber.

Establishing Episcopacy through Eating and Drinking as a Means of Separation

Above is a rough presentation of the conflictual situation over the table in the burgeoning Christian communities in the second century. Before going on, we need to clarify that, in the early stage of 'heretical' conflicts, the 'heretics' were in the church, rather than forming separate churches outside. We have a few pieces of evidence for

330. *Gos. Phil.* 56. 26-57. 8.

331. *Ibid.*, 70. 5-7.

332. *Ibid.*, 76. 22-33.

333. Irenaeus also mentioned about cloaking effect of Gnostics in *Haer.* I. 21. 4.

this. First, according to Ignatius' letter to the Smyrnaeans, Christians who had a docetic tendency began to have their own gathering while they still had membership in the 'orthodox' church:

They remain aloof from eucharist and prayers because they do not confess that the eucharist is the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, which the Father raised by his goodness . . . It is right, then, to avoid such people and to speak about them neither privately nor publicly, but to pay attention to the prophets and in particular the gospel, in which the passion is shown us and the resurrection accomplished.³³⁴

From the literary context of these verses, we know that, at least up to this point of time, there was no clear separation between 'heretic' and 'orthodox' Christians.³³⁵ Second, William Schoedel assumes that the Gnostic group was led by an elder, who was apparently a member of the church in Smyrna.³³⁶ So, this group of Christians either constituted the same church with the 'orthodox' brethren or, less likely, formed a local congregation as a part of the 'orthodox' church. Third, a scholastic assumption that Marcion had found "a friendly reception at Rome" even after he was cursed by Polycarp of Smyrna illustrates that 'excommunication' was, at first, a local matter, and that the

334. Ign. *Smyrn.*, 8.

335. Eusebius mentions that the heretics attacked the church "by cloaking themselves with the same name of our religion." This remark also implies that 'heretics' and 'the orthodox' were together in the church to certain point of time. *Hist. eccl.* 4. 7.

336. William R Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 236.

church at large lacked any cohesion on a large scale.³³⁷ These evidences illustrate a picture that there was no clear separation between the 'orthodox' and the Gnostics in the second century.

With this cursory understanding of the situation, we now return to our initial social quest. David Kertzer, an anthropologist, gives us an interesting insight for our quest. In his *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, which is in line with Emile Durkheim's earlier works, Kertzer articulates the function of ritual in social life, and argues that ritual is the social glue that provides the symbolic mechanism to express solidarity and consensus: "People need to construct a social identity for themselves and they need to express a sense of communion with others. Ritual provides an important means of accomplishing these aims."³³⁸ One interesting question that Kertzer asks to reach his conclusion is insightful for this work: Does ritual solidarity require a consensus of beliefs? In other words, is homogeneous belief of the ritual participants a prerequisite to obtain social solidarity through ritual? Kertzer argues that solidarity is not based on shared beliefs and ideas: "His [Durkheim] genius lies in having recognized that ritual builds solidarity without requiring the sharing of beliefs. Solidarity is produced by people acting together, not by people thinking together."³³⁹ What makes it possible is, "the very ambiguity of the

337. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 144-45.

338. David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 75.

339. *Ibid.*, 76.

symbols employed in ritual action that makes ritual useful in fostering solidarity without consensus."³⁴⁰ In the same ritual, with the same symbols, people often have, "diverse and conflicting meanings." He goes on to say, "human thought processes do not require resolution of such conflict, nor any necessary consistency in symbolic use."³⁴¹ This theory would allow early Christians the possibility of being in unity through the eucharistic meal, while holding a diversity of beliefs. Unfortunately, however, the early Christians chose a different path, which is also described in Kertzer: "There is always the danger that ambiguity gives way to open conflict about the meaning of the rites. In such cases, rather than producing political unity, the rites can become just another battleground."³⁴² The 'orthodox' and Gnostic Christians pushed one another out to the "Fear zone," rather than co-existing in the "Grace margin" with the "virtue of ambiguities."

Strategies of the 'orthodox' side to exclude 'heretics' and make a solid boundary to protect and intensify their identity were various. The most immediate and severe one was demonization as seen in Irenaeus:

Let those persons, therefore, who blaspheme the Creator, either by openly expressed words, such as the disciples of Marcion, or by a perversion of the sense [of Scripture], as those of Valentinus and all the Gnostics falsely so called, be recognised as agents of Satan by all those who worship God; through whose agency Satan now, and not before, has been seen to speak against God, even Him

340. Ibid., 69.

341. Ibid., 69.

342. Ibid., 71.

who has prepared eternal fire for every kind of apostasy.³⁴³

Naming opponents agents of Satan was not a new strategy; it was one of the most popular and powerful expression of exclusion and enmity.³⁴⁴ Another strategy, which required more time and sophistication, was canonization. The concern of 'orthodox' Christians was to preserve their *historical* root, i.e., the Jesus tradition and the Old Testament, from being discarded especially by Gnostics and Marcionites. Yet, it was not just a defensive means. Presenting normative and authentic documents of Christianity, which were arguably based on "apostolic origin,"³⁴⁵ also worked as "powerful weapons in a culture which respected tradition and oracular prediction."³⁴⁶

These two strategies as well as the cosmological-theological confrontation described above were, however, not powerful enough to secure 'Christian identity,' since they all were based on persuasion, which lacked any means of enforcement. 'Orthodox' Christians needed more decisive means beyond persuasion to make a firm boundary to separate the 'without' from the 'within,' and officialdom was the answer to this need.

343. Irenaeus, *Haer.* V. 26. 2.

344. For details of how 'orthodox' Christians demonized Gnostics, see Elaine H Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), 149-78. In Acts of Thomas and Acts of Andrew, meat-eating is described as demonic. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 189-94.

345. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 163.

346. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 333.

Employing officialdom as a means to battle against 'heretics' was Ignatius' great contribution. To be sure, before Ignatius, the ideas of distinction between 'priests' and 'laymen' and an emphasis on orderly worship were found in 1 *Clement*.³⁴⁷ Yet, Clement was totally different from Ignatius in that Clement did not intend to subjugate laymen to 'priests.' In 1 *Clement*, there still existed "the primitive Christian concept of the independent responsibility of the congregation as a whole."³⁴⁸ It was Ignatius who, for the first time, implemented a system of a monarchical episcopacy, having raised the office of bishop to the axis of unity for the congregation. In each of his seven authentic letters save the letter to the Romans, Ignatius spends a significant amount of time emphasizing the importance of unity with the bishop and submission of the congregation to the exclusive authority of the bishop. This frequency implied that the establishment of 'officialdom' was the most prevailing and overarching theme in Ignatius' letters, rather than a practical response to a particular problem of a local church as in the Pauline epistles.³⁴⁹ For example, Ignatius argued that Christians must "be attuned to the bishop like strings to a cithara,"³⁵⁰ and "obey [the bishop] without hypocrisy."³⁵¹ In this world,

347. 1 *Clement*. 40. 5.

348. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 94.

349. Schoedel strangely fails to include this significant theme in his discussion: Schoedel, Ignatius, and Koester, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 17-31.

350. Ign. *Eph.* 4. 1; cf. *Phld.* 1. 2.

351. Ign. *Magn.* 3. 2.

the bishop took the place of the Commandment, the Church, Jesus Christ, and even God.³⁵² Therefore, Christians must "be careful not to oppose the bishop, in order that we may be obedient to God."³⁵³ Considering that Ignatius' letters were likely written just a few weeks before his death as a martyr under persecution of the Roman Empire, it is interesting that the main theme of the letters was not 'against the persecutor,' or 'coping with persecution,' but 'against heretics!' Nowhere in his letters, did Ignatius express concerns about the matters of who persecuted Christians or why, nor did he provide instructions of how Christians should cope with the situation. It is understandable only when we know that for Ignatius, like many other contemporary Christians, martyrdom was the way to imitate Christ's own passion and to "reach God."³⁵⁴ His only wish concerning his martyrdom was that the wild beasts devour him "promptly, not as they have done with some, whom they were too timid to touch."³⁵⁵ Ignatius' chief concern on his way to martyrdom was the unity of the church, endangered by 'heretics' (especially 'Docetists'), and his solution to this problem was the unity of the church through obedience to the bishop. Ignatius even interpreted his own martyrdom in relation to the union with the bishop: as "God's wheat" Ignatius offered himself as "a pure bread of

352. Ign. *Trall.* 13. 2, 2. 1; *Smyrn.* 8. 2; *Magn.* 6. 1.

353. Ign. *Eph.* 5. 3; cf. *Phld.* 7. 1.

354. Ign. *Rom.* 2. 1. For this specific aspect of early Christian martyrdom, see Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 179-204.

355. Ign. *Rom.* 5. 2.

Christ" and as "a ransom on behalf of those who are obedient to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons."³⁵⁶ Thus, establishing the officialdom of the bishop at the center of Christian unity had the highest priority in the agenda of Ignatius' letters.³⁵⁷

This establishment of the position of the bishop is important for this study that attempts to find the role of eating and drinking in the formation of Christianity, since the role of the bishop at that time was not theologian *per se*, but the 'cultic' official,³⁵⁸ and the only regular 'cult' practice of contemporary Christians was the eucharistic meal. It was a later development that 'theologians' came to have the power and authority in the Christian church.³⁵⁹ Roughly speaking, by the middle of the second century, while Christianity still remained as a mystery religion with baptism as initiation and the eucharistic meal as rite, the eucharistic meal was one single focal point of all Christian religious activities. Without the eucharist, there was no church, no worship, no communion and no redemption. And, more importantly, without the bishop for Ignatius,

356. Ign. *Rom.* 4. 1; *Pol.* 6. 1.

357. To be sure, Ignatius did not invent three-tiered offices of bishop-presbyter-deacon. It was there already at the time of Ignatius. Ignatius' contribution was to turn this 'loosen' officialdom into a fixed hierarchical order with the bishop at the center. For the historical development of officialdom in the early church, see von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*.

358. *Ibid.*, 105-6.

359. For an exemplary work about how, later, the bishop came to have the power through the possession of *paideia* and the role as the patron, see Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, The Curti Lectures, 1988 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), esp., chap. 4.

there was no eucharistic meal. In other words, the bishop obtained the power through the exclusive authority over the eating and drinking of the congregation. This was an example of the subtextual power of eating and drinking in the ritual to create unity and establish identity.

Ignatius stated it in a direct manner. For Ignatius, the single criterion to distinguish 'heretics' from the 'orthodox' was whether they "do everything without regard for him [the bishop]."³⁶⁰ Ignatius repeated this admonishment, "You must do nothing without the bishop,"³⁶¹ more than five times in this letters. Of course, 'doing' in this sentence meant nothing but 'doing the eucharist,' and 'doing the baptism,' as elaborated in one of his letters:

Let no one do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop. Only that Eucharist which is under the authority of the bishop (or whomever he himself designates) is to be considered valid . . . It is not permissible either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop.³⁶²

With regard to this power of the bishop, the concept of communion (*koinonia*) should be reconsidered. 'Communion' means, practically, 'membership' of the Church and, theologically, union with Christ. Yet, in the early stage of Christianity, it narrowly meant participating in the eating and drinking of the eucharistic meal.³⁶³ In the local

360. Ign. *Magn.* 4. 1.

361. Ign. *Magn.* 7. 1; *Trall* 2. 2; *Phld.* 7. 2.

362. Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.

363. Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship*, 17.

congregation, eating and drinking at the same table was the basic criterion to decide those in-communion and those ex-communion. In this context, the bishop came to have the exclusive power to judge who would be in-communion and ex-communion, the power to make a borderline between those within the church and those without. Endowment of this power to the bishop was well illustrated in the famous dictum, 'one eucharist - one bishop - one God':

Take care, therefore, to participate in one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup which leads to unity through his blood; there is one altar, just as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.³⁶⁴

This 'trinitarian' formula, 'one eucharist - one bishop - one God,' epitomizes the second century 'orthodox' strategy against 'heretics': and, as shown in the formula, the meal table was the central battleground.

Ignatius' strategy of raising the post of the bishop to the hub of the church's unity partly succeeded. Although the unity of the church was not fully established as intended, at least the 'orthodox' camp succeeded in generating the power and authority for the bishop, and this power-generation was processed through instituting the bishop as the sole provider of "Christian food."³⁶⁵ Now the food that gave "immortality" to partakers was nothing but the food that the bishop consecrated. Immediately, it became a custom

364. Ign. *Phld.* 4.

365. Ign. *Trall.* 6. 1.

that, if a local church did not have a bishop, a portion of consecrated bread and wine should be carried out to them from a bishop's church.³⁶⁶

Apostolic Succession, *Paterfamilias*, and the Episcopacy

The success of the power-generating institutionalization presumably depended on two contemporary social institutions. The first was the concept of succession, which was known as "apostolic succession." The concept of succession was a well established social institution in Greek philosophical schools and Roman governing circles.³⁶⁷ In the former case, succession represented a successor's "doctrinal loyalty" to the founder's view, and in the latter case, the legitimation of a successor's "political inheritance" from the preceding emperor.³⁶⁸ A notable structure of "succession," in the case of philosophical school, was that there were two lines of names, one for "successor," who followed the founder's teaching, the other for "differed," who freely differed the

366. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 105. Also Zizioulas maintains that, unlike pagans in "country areas" and "villages," who formed independent religious communities having their own local deity (*genius pagi*), by the middle of the second century, the Christians of the villages formed one eucharistic assembly with their urban brethren. Zizioulas does not specify how the former participated in the eucharistic meal of the urban church. We assume that the food was carried out to them as Dix suggested. Jean Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 94.

367. A recent monograph on this topic is Robert Lee Williams, *Bishop Lists: Formation of Apostolic Succession of Bishops in Ecclesiastical Crises* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005). Also, see von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*.

368. Williams, *Bishop Lists*, 24-9.

founder's teaching.³⁶⁹ The second century 'orthodox' Christians adapted this way of legitimation from their contemporaries to defend their leaders in episcopal authority as the legitimate heirs to God's authority. It was a useful supplement for the 'orthodox' strategy. As mentioned above, by the first half of the second century, there was no clear separation in the church between the 'orthodox' and Gnostic Christians. In this situation, not only the 'orthodox' but also Gnostic Christians became or claimed to be bishops. In other words, simply emphasizing a bishop's exclusive authority was not effective enough to achieve the goal. A further step was needed.

For this reason, Hegesippus and Irenaeus adapted this social convention.³⁷⁰ They wanted their contemporaries to distinguish clearly the 'successor' from the 'differed.' A quotation from Irenaeus provides a picture of how the 'orthodox' related the idea of tradition to legitimacy of the office:

Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church, — those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father. But [it is also incumbent] to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever, [looking upon them] either as heretics of perverse minds, or as schismatics puffed up and self-pleasing, or again as hypocrites, acting thus for the sake of lucre and vainglory. For all these have fallen from the truth . . . But those who cleave asunder, and separate the unity of

369. Ibid., 24.

370. To be sure, it was Clement of Rome who first mentioned 'succession.' Yet he did not fully adapt it: "God sent Christ, Christ sent the apostles, and the apostles appointed the first bishops and elders." (1 *Clem.* 42.) For the development of the idea of 'succession' especially in Christian circles, see von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 149ff.

the Church, [shall] receive from God the same punishment as Jeroboam did.³⁷¹

This adaptation was especially effective for the battle against Gnostics, since legitimating authority via receiving/transmitting tradition was a Gnostic feature. Gnostics used chains of names, or genealogies, to validate special teachings, "not accessible to everyone, which are supposed to have been given orally or in writing by particular apostles to particular chosen persons."³⁷² By using the same method, and adding the argument that their list was more perfect and more ancient, 'orthodox' Christians invalidated the ground of Gnostic authority and intensified the legitimacy of the 'orthodox' bishops' dominance.³⁷³

The second social institution that helped to form bishops' exclusive authority was *paterfamilias*, which was more deeply rooted in the everyday life of the contemporary Romans than 'succession.' The Latin word *paterfamilias* literally means "the head of the

371. Irenaeus, *Haer.* IV. 26. 2.

372. *Ibid.*, 158.

373. According to Williams, *Bishop Lists*, 132-33, 'Orthodox' logic can be summarized, for example, in this way:

This argument runs as follows. Assumption: The apostles would pass on the highest tradition they knew to the same persons to whom they passed on the highest position of authority in the churches, their own position of authority. Fact 1: They delivered their position of authority to a person they instituted as bishop in a church. Fact 2: None of the bishops in the churches knew of any secret tradition with hidden mysteries. Fact 3: The succession of bishops from the apostles, as indicated in the bishop list, is unbroken in the Roman church. Conclusion: The original apostolic tradition remains unchanged in the Roman church to the present day.

family," yet this literal meaning does not give us a full picture of *paterfamilias* as an social institution. Besides the modern notion of family and household, we need to understand three peculiar aspects of *paterfamilias* in antiquity.³⁷⁴ First, a household in the Greco-Roman world consisted not just of the husband, wife, children and grandchildren, but also of relatives, free men, and slaves. Thus, the size of a household was much bigger than a modern one. Several households constituted a village, and several villages a *polis*. Second, the household was the basic unit not just for social, economic and political life, but also for religious life as "the cultic center of the family." In various family rites, the *paterfamilias* presided over the rites with priestly authority. Third, the *paterfamilias* ruled over the household thus: "his slave (animate property) as a master, his wife (a free member of the house) as a statesman, and his children, who are subject to him, as a monarch." The household with these features accommodated virtually every kind of social and religious gathering such as mystery religions, foreign cults, philosophical schools, Roman associations, and Jewish synagogues.³⁷⁵ In addition to these contemporary institutions, the church became a new affiliation to the household. And, notably, in the house church, not the traditional *paterfamilias*, but the bishop took over the role of *paterfamilias*.³⁷⁶ It would not be difficult to assume that people

374. These three aspects are reconstructed based on Harry O. Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement, and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), 15-18.

375. Ibid., 18-24.

376. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 22-7, 30: "If the bishop had a special representative

identified the bishop with the *paterfamilias*, and gave him the due authority of a *paterfamilias* without problem.

The establishment of the monarchical episcopacy brought a prompt and radical shift in the power structure to the congregation, considering that in the Pauline church, only a generation prior, no particular person claimed to have exclusive power over other members. Only the Spirit was confessed as having power and authority to bind the congregation to one body. To be sure, Paul also employed a patriarchal relationship to his congregation.³⁷⁷ Yet, he did not use or develop such hierarchical relationship for spiritual control and subordination.³⁷⁸ Rather, he repeatedly emphasized the importance of the freedom in the Spirit and treated the congregation as "fellow-workers."³⁷⁹ Paul succinctly described this 'egalitarian' relationship in 2 Corinthians: "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (4:5). This Pauline ideal did not last long. To create and build its identity in the midst of rival movements that also claimed to have the Christian truth, what we now think of as 'orthodox' Christianity chose first to draw firm and narrow lines according to confessional differences, and then, to give the bishop the monarchical dominion so that

function it must therefore be as the 'father of the family' of God, 'from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.'" (30)

377. 1 Cor 4:15.

378. For example, as seen in 1 Cor 9:6ff; 2 Cor 1: 24, 11:7ff; Phil 4:14; 1Thess 2:5ff; 2 Thess 3:3ff.

379. For example, Gal 5:13; 1 Cor 7:23; 1 Cor 3:9, 21-30; 2 Cor 4:5.

he maintained the boundaries.

So, did their goal, the unity of the church, come true? Unfortunately, no. Walter Bauer's classic work teaches us that the diversity of early Christianity was too wide to be merged easily into one narrow stratum.³⁸⁰ The unity of the church was only possible in a way that trimmed down the membership of Christianity by expelling parts of the congregation. The eucharistic meal in this context was the chief means for this segregating process. The price was high. Now, God's table, which was once located in the "Grace margin," where two polarized parties (the divine and the human) met in grace, became a Bishop's table, where no room for grace existed.

380. Walter Bauer, Robert A. Kraft, and Gerhard Krodel, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia,: Fortress Press, 1971).

Chapter 7

Eating and Drinking as a Means of Building Christian Identity under Roman Persecution

Beside those 'inner-Christian' conflicts discussed above, the early church simultaneously confronted a more violent challenge from outside the church. The designation 'Roman imperial cult' is often used to epitomize the challenge, yet this designation is short of fully explaining what Christians confronted. The hostile situation in which Christians were located was complicated in many ways. It was not a simple contest between Roman gods and the Christian god, nor was it a simple confrontation between Roman imperialism and its subjects. There were many and various reasons for Roman hostility to Christians, which claimed thousands of Christian lives over more than two hundred and fifty years (albeit sporadically). For the purposes of this work, however, this situation will be simplified and understood with one aspect: confrontation between two different identities, i.e., Roman identity vs. Christian identity.

Through the imperial cult, Romans attempted to build a Roman identity across the ever expanding empire. The cult rapidly spread across the empire, since it incorporated elements of older cults of heroes, ancestors, and rulers. The cult was intolerant toward 'non-participants,' not because it was monotheistic, but because it rested on the concept of the *pax deorum*. As we can imagine, the contact of the imperial cult with early Christianity was often hostile. While the *pax deorum* was intolerant to its transgressors, Christian monotheism did not have room to accept the deified emperor and to embrace

Roman identity, which was presented in the Roman cult. The consequence was various forms and degrees of persecutions. To cope with this critical situation, Christians developed their own identity through, first, voluntary martyrdom and, second, re-interpretation of the eucharistic meal in the context of persecution and martyrdom. The key to this re-interpretation was to understand the eucharistic meal representing the self-sacrifices Christ and martyrs offered to God. Thus, the sacrifice became the battleground for the identity-conflicts: Christians confronted the imperial sacrifice for the emperor with their own sacrifices, sacrifices of Jesus and martyrs. This confrontation manifested itself in the form of 'what they eat': meat or bread.

Romanization, *Pax Deorum* and Christians

The Roman religion was polytheistic and open to "new gods," which mainly immigrated from their conquered provinces.³⁸¹ Besides various Greek cults, Egyptian, Syrian and Anatolian cults persisted in their original regions and also made their way to Rome. Isis and Serapis, Cybele and Attis, Adonis and Atargatis and Baal were just a few immigrant deities out of many. As Robert Turcan notes, while the Romans invaded and conquered, expanding the empire, the foreign gods made "great religious invasions" to

381. For the details about foreign cults that migrated to Rome, see Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Jörg Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

the empire in the Roman era.³⁸² Turcan explains the reason for the persistence of 'local' religions in the imperial period:

The vast majority of Roman citizens did not live in Rome, were not ethnically or physically linked with Rome, took no part in the affairs of the city, above all from the time when *civitas* was conferred on all the Italians, then on the inhabitants of Cisalpine Gaul, followed by numerous Transalpine Gauls, Greeks and Africans . . . They needed cults in which they knew one another and met together to share the same ideal, the same sense of the world and life, the same bread.³⁸³

Simply speaking, many people in the empire, which had now become an *Uranopolis* (universe-town), suffered "from loneliness and anonymity,"³⁸⁴ and they found fulfillment not in the official cults of the empire, but in traditional local cults.

In this sense, the openness of the Roman religion was the result of the irresistible expansion of the foreign cults. Although the Roman authorities accepted foreign forms of devotion, they were careful in choosing acceptable forms of worship and in adapting them into their religious system. Price, Beard and North note the Romans' reluctance and concern in accepting foreign gods:

. . . traditional Roman paganism was not, as has been claimed, 'completely tolerant, in heaven as on earth.' The fact that there was a plurality of gods did not necessarily mean that religion had no limits, or that (apart, of course, from Christianity) 'anything went'. Polytheistic systems can be as resistant as monotheism to innovation and foreign influence.³⁸⁵

382. Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 4.

383. Ibid., 17.

384. Ibid., 18.

385. Mary Beard, John A North, and S. R. F Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 1, A

There were, "clear and repeated signs of concern about the influence of foreign cults,"³⁸⁶ in Roman religious attitudes, and their concern produced two somewhat 'conservative' strategies to cope with the waves of foreign forms of devotion, i.e., Romanization and suppression. When Romans accepted foreign gods for whatever reason, they 'Romanized' them by giving them Latin names, detaching them from their original forms of cult practice, and annexing them into the Roman pantheon. Notable examples of this 'naturalization' were "the Greek Asclepius, the Semitic Aphrodite of Mount Eryx and the Phrygian Great Mother."³⁸⁷ Contrarily, if foreign cults sneaked into the Roman world without such adaptation, the Romans suppressed them. In fact, many deities received hostile reception from the Roman or provincial authority.³⁸⁸ One such example is reported in detail in the Roman historian Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.³⁸⁹ Livy provides a picture of how widely non-Roman cults spread in the Empire, and how the Romans attempted to suppress them. Livy reports that, circa the second century B.C., "many thousands" of Bacchic followers performed the Bacchic rites, "all over Italy," and

History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 212.

386. Ibid., 212.

387. Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 12.

388. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 219ff.

389. Book 39. 8-19. Reprinted in *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook: Sacred Texts of the Mystery Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Marvin W Meyer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 81-93.

recently, "even in many places in Rome itself."³⁹⁰ Since in their rites, "no sort of crime, no kind of immorality was left unattempted," the Roman senate decided to prohibit this foreign cult, arresting all Bacchic priests and destroying all shrines of Bacchic worship, first at Rome and then throughout Italy.³⁹¹ Thus, the situation was ambiguous: on the one hand, many foreign deities entered the Roman pantheon, but on the other hand, other foreign cults were persecuted and eradicated. The criterion was clear according to Livy:

How often in the times of our fathers and grandfathers, have the magistrates been given the task of forbidding the performance of foreign ceremonies, of excluding the dealers in sacrifices and soothsaying from the Forum, the Circus, and the city, of searching out and burning prophetic books, and of abolishing every system of sacrifice except the traditional Roman method?³⁹²

In other words, only the Roman method was accepted. Thus, Romanization was the key factor in accepting/refusing foreign devotions.

Why did Romans 'Romanize' foreign cults, rather than importing them as they were? When the Roman authorities were on guard against the waves of foreign cults, what was their concern? Price, Beard and North explain 'Romanization' ('Roman-ness' in their terminology) juxtaposing a pair of Roman terms, *religio* and *superstitio*.³⁹³ According to them, *religio* refers to "the traditional honours paid to the gods by the state," whereas *superstitio* refers to "excessive forms of behavior," or "excessive

390. Ibid., 88.

391. Ibid., 92.

392. Ibid., 90.

393. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 216-7.

commitment," losing "their self-control." The former was accepted as meeting the requirement of 'Roman-ness,' whereas the latter was suppressed. In this understanding, Romanization was an ancient version of sacerdotalism that emphasized the right *form* of devotion. This dichotomy of *religio* and *superstitio* explains the suppression and persecution of many mystery cults in the imperial period. Foreign cultic forms, which were extremely emotional and temperamental, were far from traditional Roman ones. This understanding, however, does not explain satisfactorily the reason for the Christian persecution, and misleads us to believe that the concern of Romans was purely religious and sacerdotal.

Christians were suppressed more severely and by longer persecutions than any other cult in Roman history. Why were they persecuted? On the surface, Christianity was labeled as *superstitio* and this was the accusation for persecution.³⁹⁴ But the sacerdotal understanding of *religio/superstitio* cannot explain the reason of the Christian persecution. The Bacchae were persecuted because of their cultic form and related moral issues, as mentioned above. But, unlike the Bacchae, Christians were reported as innocuous, not having such problems, as seen in Pliny The Younger's letter to Trajan:

They had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when

394. Christians were accused of 'deadly superstition' (*exitiabilis superstitio*) as early as the first persecution by Nero. See Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 162.

called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary harmless kind.³⁹⁵

This letter declared the innocence of the Christians in the face of lingering suspicions of cannibalism and incest.³⁹⁶

Then, again, why were Christians persecuted? In fact, Pliny's letter clearing Christians of false moral accusations did little to prevent further persecutions. Even after having written the letter, Pliny himself kept persecuting Christians simply for being Christians without associated criminal actions.³⁹⁷ This treatment of Christians was an "anomaly in the Roman legal system" which had no parallel in the Roman criminal law.³⁹⁸ Christians, unlike contemporary Jews, Egyptians and other imperial subjects, never made uprisings against the Roman authorities under the name of their deity, nor did they stir the social order with astonishing processions on the streets. Yet, being Christian constituted a reason for persecution. What was the Roman concern when they persecuted Christians? To this question, de Ste. Croix provides the most reasonable

395. Quoted in Robert L Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 22.

396. According to Eusebius, Christians were accused of "clandestine rites involving promiscuous intercourse and ritual meals in which human flesh was eaten, the so-called Thystean banquets (Thystes, who seduced his brother's wife, was invited to a banquet in which his sons were served up to him) and Oedipean unions (Athenagoras, *Legatio* 3.1; 31-32)." See, *Hist. Eccl.*, V. I. 14; *Ibid.*, 17.

397. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 237.

398. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," *Past and Present*, no. 26 (1963): 20.

answer: Christianity became a threat to the *pax deorum*. Here is a quotation from de Ste.

Croix:

The answer is clear: it is given to us over and over again in the sources. It was not so much the positive beliefs and practices of the Christians which aroused pagan hostility, but above all the negative element in their religion: their total refusal to worship any god but their own. The monotheistic exclusiveness of the Christians was believed to alienate the goodwill of the gods, to endanger what the Romans called the *pax deorum* (the right harmonious relationship between gods and men), and to be responsible for disasters which overtook the community.³⁹⁹

Although, as Joseph Streeter rightly notes, de Ste. Croix's article has a Marxist--or anti-Christian--overtone in general, his argument is persuasive.⁴⁰⁰ Romans felt that the *pax deorum*, which denotes "the correct relations between man and divine that guarantee the well-being of the empire,"⁴⁰¹ was endangered when Christians disdained their gods as "demons" or "useless dumb idols" and refused to participate in their cults.⁴⁰² de Ste.

Croix elaborates:

The Christians asserted openly either that the pagan gods did not exist at all or that they were malevolent demons. Not only did they themselves refuse to take part in pagan religious rites: they would not even recognize that others ought to do so. As a result, because a large part of Greek religion and the whole of the Roman state religion was very much a community affair, the mass of pagans were naturally apprehensive that the gods would vent their wrath at this dishonour not

399. Ibid., 24.

400. Joseph Streeter, "Introduction: de Ste. Croix on Persecution," in *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, ed. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, Michael Whitby, and Joseph Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11.

401. Ibid., 16.

402. For example, see Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 306-7.

upon the Christians alone but upon the whole community; and when disasters did occur, they were only too likely to fasten the blame on to the Christians.⁴⁰³

Although de Ste. Croix's argument that the *pax deorum* was the Romans' reason for persecuting Christians is persuasive, he fails in his article to point out the aspects of the *pax deorum* that are political rhetoric and social propaganda. One presumes that, when local mobs attacked Christians after disasters, the *pax deorum* was the real issue at stake for them. They might truly believe that disasters occurred because of the wrath of gods. However, believing that the Roman authorities felt the same would be a naive assumption. For example, when Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian persecuted Christians, their intention was surely more than pleasing the gods. What they feared were "internal division and the political violence that might erupt therefrom."⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, the real issue was not just Christian exclusivity and hostility to pluralism as Croix argues. The issue was not just religious, but also social and political. Utilizing the popular rhetoric of the *pax deorum*, Roman authorities propagated one aspect of their social agenda, i.e., social solidarity and integration. A "threat to the *pax deorum*," which was the accusation against the Christians, was in fact a rhetorical promulgation of a "threat to political order, social stability, and religious conformity."⁴⁰⁵ When Christianity spread like disease and

403. De Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?", 25.

404. Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 31.

405. Elizabeth A Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture*

wildfire, and their aggressive evangelism successfully gained local elites and those in higher classes, Romans found a significant crisis in their imperial integrity. They needed countermeasures to manage the crisis. With the notion of the *pax deorum* and the measures to secure it, Roman ruling elites wanted to ensure "notions of religious obligation, political responsibility, and the nature of Roman society's relationship to the divine" to be congruent across the empire.⁴⁰⁶ In this sense, for Roman rulers, the *pax deorum* was nothing but a way to express Roman identity.

In fact, religion itself is a manifestation of identity. A religion leads its followers to share what they value and what they pursue. J. S. Mackenzie notes this aspect of religion: "What we worship is the counterpart of what we are."⁴⁰⁷ And "we" in this note does not necessarily mean "individuals." Religion also constructs national identities. Building national identity through religion was especially crucial for the Roman empire, since it rapidly expanded its territory to areas where virtually no identity-factors were shared. In this sense, Turcan rightly points out that "national identity" was what Romans were anxious about with the waves of the *externa superstitio*.⁴⁰⁸

In this chapter, we have briefly examined key concepts in Roman religion, such as

Making (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 37.

406. Ibid., 37.

407. J. S. Mackenzie, "The Three Religions," *International Journal of Ethics*, no. 2 (1892): 162.

408. Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 11.

Romanization, *religio/superstitio*, and the *pax deorum*, to understand the Romans' religious landscape in the imperial period. My point is that the real agenda behind these concepts was Roman identity. In the imperial period, only the cults that were inculcated in the Roman method and, therefore, non-threatening to Roman identity were accepted. Others, like Christianity, were persecuted with the label of *superstitio*.

The Imperial Cult and Roman Identity

Romans heavily depended on their religion to build Roman identity across the empire, as we saw above, and, in the imperial period, the chief religious constituent was the imperial cult. In this chapter, we will elaborate on how Romans built Roman identity through the imperial cult.

The imperial cult began with the start of the Roman Empire. Although Julius Caesar, who played a critical role in the transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire, was also deified after his death, the imperial cult is considered to have begun with Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, the first Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire. The most symbolic event of the commencement of the cult was the shift to starting the new year on Augustus' birthday, September 23rd.⁴⁰⁹ The deification was first proposed by proconsuls in Asia Minor, and then accepted/developed by the Roman senate as the appropriate expression of gratitude for the *pax romana*, which was

409. S. R. F Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 55.

Augustus' greatest achievement.⁴¹⁰ The letter of the proconsul gives us a vivid picture of the beginning of the cult:

[It is difficult to say] whether the birthday of the divine emperor has caused more joy, or more benefit. We may rightly set it at the beginning of all things; not indeed in terms of the order of nature, but because of the advantage (accruing to us). He has re-established all that had decayed and turned to disaster. Thanks to him, the whole world presents a different aspect. Had not the emperor, who is the common happiness of all the human race, been born, then the world would have fallen victim to corruption. This is why one may rightly regard that event as the beginning of life and existence: the event of his birth set an end and a limit to whatever regrets people had at the fact of their existence.⁴¹¹

Thereafter, all succeeding emperors for the following three hundred years to the era of Constantine followed the model established by Augustus.⁴¹² Roman emperors now found their places in the Roman pantheon with the traditional Roman gods. Thus, at the time of the birth of Christianity, the imperial cult was the main religious presence in the empire. Burgeoning Christianity had to compete with the imperial cult from its birth until *pax* arrived with Constantine. The Roman Empire attempted to unify the expanding empire by integrating the subjects of the conquered provinces into various portions of the web of the empire, using the imperial cult. This aspect of the imperial cult was recognized early by Dio Cassius, a Roman historian in the third century C.E. He saw the imperial cult as, "one unifying factor in the religions of the vast imperial territory, one aspect of worship

410. Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 296ff.

411. *OGIS* 458, quoted in Klauck, 297.

412. For historical development of the cult after Augustus, see Klauck, 301ff, and Price, *Rituals and Power*, 25ff.

that all Roman subjects shared."⁴¹³ Thus, the imperial cult was the Roman way to ensure this integration both symbolically and practically. In other words, for the people in the empire, participation in the imperial cult was the sign of accepting, "the essential quality of the society, its Romanness."⁴¹⁴ In this context, the early Christians had two choices: to either accept the cult and syncretize their faith and rituals with it, or to reject the cult and compete against it. Most Christians chose the latter. Before elaborating on Christian reactions, we will examine the imperial cult with a focus on its identity-building role. This overview will show the dominance it claimed in the imperial society.

First of all, the imperial cult was "not a striking innovation"⁴¹⁵; it was deeply rooted in the Greco-Roman traditions. When Julius Caesar was deified as *divus* Julius with a formal decree of deification in 42 B.C. and with the establishment of altars, sacrifices, and a temple, Romans did not regard it as a new invention. Questions remains as to whether *divus* Julius was deified in his lifetime or after death, or whether he became

413. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 318. As seen in this quotation:

Those who attempt to distort our religion with strange rites you should abhor and punish, not merely for the sake of the gods, but such men by bringing in new divinities in place of the old, persuade many to adopt foreign practices, from which spiring up conspiracies, factions and political clubs which are far from profitable to a monarchy. Do not therefore permit anyone to be an atheist or a sorcerer. Dio Cassius, 52. 36. 2., Recited from Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 63.

414. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 56.

415. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 169.

a god or a hero.⁴¹⁶ Despite these ambiguities, one thing seems clear: no Roman historian accused the deification of being blasphemy to their deities and no public opposition in Rome is known. Thereafter, the new cult rapidly spread across the empire, and the emperors, either living or dead, could firmly assume their places beside the deities.

Two Greco-Roman factors made the deification of (even living) emperors acceptable to Romans and its subjects. First, unlike in modern Judaeo-Christian thought, the boundary between human and divine was not rigidly defined in Roman religion.⁴¹⁷ The idea of a fluidity existing between gods and men might go back as far as Hesiod, an ancient Greek poet circa 700 B.C. In his *Works and Days*, we find five categories of being in a hierarchical order: gods, *daimones*, heroes, humans and beasts. One interesting feature of this genealogy is that the genealogies of gods and humans are not separate, but are in one category. Hesiod himself clearly states this: "Or if you will, I will sum you up another tale well and skillfully--and do you lay it up to your heart,--how the gods and mortal men sprang from *one source*. (emphasis mine)"⁴¹⁸ Hesiod explains

416. See Price's discussion in *Rituals and Power*, 32, 75. In short, Romans divinized the emperor after death, whereas Greeks divinized the reigning emperor. See also, S. R. F Price, "Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984): 79-95. In this article, Price, after surveying the use of the Greek term *theos* and its Latin translations *deus* and *divus* in the context of the imperial cult, argues that the emperor was "located in an ambivalent position, higher than mortals but not fully the equal of the gods." (94) This ambiguity is also discussed in 215-16 of Price's book above.

417. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 141.

418. Hesiod, *Op.* 106-08.

the age of humans as the result of a decline of divine ages; thus gods and humans are not rigidly divided. Furthermore, in Hesiod's system, there are two kinds of beings, *daimones* and heroes, who bridge gods and humans. Their existence disallows a rigid dichotomy between gods and humans. In fact, for the ancient people in the Greco-Roman world, the accounts of a god becoming a human (either in form of direct epiphany or in form of metamorphosis), or a human becoming a *daimon* (while alive or after death), or a *daimon* becoming a god (or having godlike power) were very familiar.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, the deification of the emperor was, for them, by no means a strange idea.

Second, the people in the Greco-Roman world developed various cults in accordance with the demi-gods, heroes, and their equivalents. Carla M. Antonaccio, through a thorough archaeological survey of tombs in the ancient Greece, has uncovered the initial shape of tomb cults in ancient Greece. These archaic cults testify to the fluidity between humans and the divine. Tomb cults in ancient Greece were its earliest religious activity, beginning as early as the end of Bronze age (*circa* 1000 B.C.) and reached their peak at the start of the Archaic period (*circa* 700 B.C.). They were so prevalent that their archaeological evidence was found in most of regions all across the ancient Greece.⁴²⁰ At tombs (or at hero-shrines in nearby graves), two beings were

419. Pamela E. Kinlaw well summarizes the examples of these transformations from the Greco-Roman literary works. Pamela E Kinlaw, *The Christ is Jesus: Metamorphosis, Possession, and Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 15-48.

420. Carla Maria Antonaccio, *An Archaeology of Ancestors: Tomb Cult and Hero Cult in Early Greece* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 11. See also Susan E. Alcock, "Tomb Cult and the Post-Classical Polis," *American Journal of Archaeology* 95,

worshipped: heroes and ancestors. Epic heroes (e.g., Agamemnon, Odysseus, Helen and Menelaos) and heroes in myth (e.g., various local heroes) were celebrated with, "ritual offerings of food and drink, probably including consumption by participants."⁴²¹ Also, ancestors were offered ritualistic food and drink, something still seen in various modern cultures. One interesting observation is that some influential figures, such as the founder of a city, were worshipped not as humans but as heroes (thus, divine) and the cultic rituals were performed not by a private family but by a whole community.⁴²²

Antonaccio's definition of heroes well explains this fluidity between heroes and ancestors in the ancient tomb cults:

Heroes held their own peculiar place in ancient Greek religion. They were a class apart from the gods, though not without a share in their powers and prerogatives. Unlike the immortals, they had lived mortal lives. At the same time, heroes were a subset of ancestors and shared in the nature and prerogatives of the dead.⁴²³

Thus, from the very beginning of the cults in the Greco-Roman world, the division between heroes and the dead was flexible. Deification of a human (i.e., an emperor) was not an outrageous idea at all.

To be sure, we do not regard these two ancient traces as the direct background of

no. 3 (1991): 447-67. In this article, Alcock, agreeing with Antonaccio that the tomb cult began as early as in the Bronze age, maintains, "A need for elite legitimation has been advanced as one important impetus behind post-Classical tomb cult."

421. Antonaccio, *Archaeology of Ancestors*, 145ff, 256.

422. Ibid., 263ff.

423. Ibid., 1.

the imperial cult. Chronologically and regionally, these factors are too remote from the imperial cult to be considered as its direct background. We know that, between these archaic ideas/practices and the Roman imperial cult, there were the Hellenistic cults of rulers and benefactors, in which cultic honors to 'living persons' was firmly established. These cults of rulers and benefactors were more likely the direct background of the imperial cult.⁴²⁴ The reason for exploring those remote notions and practices of the ancient Greece then is to show how deeply the imperial cult was rooted in the Greco-Roman cultural soil. As use of 'the Lares,' which meant "household gods" or "the defied spirit of the dead," to describe Augustus after his deification indicates, the imperial cult was first cultivated on this favorable soil.⁴²⁵ For contemporaries, the new cult was not an anomalous institution, nor was the system forcefully imposed by the emperor. Romans were ready to accept it and to incorporate the social relations that the cult provided.

In terms of the outward ritual forms, we do not need to go into detail for this dissertation.⁴²⁶ A comment from Klauck should suffice: the imperial cult corresponded "to those found in the exercise of religion in general in the classical world: sacrifices,

424. Klauck provides a thorough historical survey on the development of the imperial cult from the ruler cult. Klauck, *Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 252ff. See also, Price, *Rituals and Power*, 25ff.

425. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 185.

426. Price provides details of architectural and iconographical aspects and Klauck provides details of ritual aspect. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 133ff; Klauck, *Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 313ff.

temples with images and priests, processions, feasts, athletic contests."⁴²⁷ Rather, we need to focus on the social implications of the cult, since the imperial cult was not merely a series of honors addressed to the emperor, but a firm establishment of well fabricated social relations that were based on the web of imperial power. In the conclusion of his *Rituals and Power*, Price clearly notes this aspect of the cult:

The imperial cult, like the cults of the traditional gods, created a relationship of power between subject and ruler. It also enhanced the dominance of local elites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and of Greek over indigenous cultures. That is, the cult was a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society.⁴²⁸

Price, Beard and North's *Religions of Rome* elaborates on this notion of the imperial cult as the web of the imperial power.⁴²⁹ These authors argue that when Roman imperialism expanded its imperial territory, the imposition of foreign control in the form of taxation, a puppet government, or military occupation was not enough to ensure *pax romana*. They needed more fundamental means (i.e., 'Romanization' in religion and culture), to ensure the social integration of the Empire. This need became urgent when "'native' rebellions in the Roman Empire tended to fight under the banner of local deities."⁴³⁰ The imperial cult was a response to this need. The imperial cult weaved the web of the imperial power in three dimensions: hierarchization of territories, organization of religious elites and

427. Ibid., 313.

428. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 248.

429. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 313-63.

430. Ibid., 314.

empire-wide ritual uniformity.

Hierarchization of territories was the most fundamental socio-religious structure to ensure the web of imperial power. The empire gave "different legal and constitutional statuses" to different levels of communities: Rome, Italy, *coloniae* and *municipia*.⁴³¹ Rome was the center of this web. It was the place where the standards of 'Romanization' in religious practices were articulated and exemplified, and where any kinds of *superstitio* were immediately eliminated to preserve Roman religious 'purity'.⁴³² At the center of Rome, there was the Capitolium overlooking the forum of Rome. In the Capitolium and its associated temples of Apollo and Mars Ultor, and all the core of the Roman deities, (e.g., "the Capitoline triad, Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, Salus publica, and deified members of the imperial house, as well as the Genius of the living emperor and the Juno of the empress") were seated.⁴³³ Thus, Rome was the hub of the imperial cult. Italy came next after Rome.

Italy was not just *a* province. It had a special position within Roman religion, not just in its geographical adjacency, but also in its loyalty to Roman religion. Italian calendars dated to the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, which were recently discovered in Rome and Italian towns, attest that Italians replaced their local festivals with the official festivals of the city of Rome. Not only festivals, but also "all rituals, temples and

431. Ibid., 321ff.

432. Ibid., 228-9.

433. Ibid., 195-6.

images of the gods in Italian towns fall under Roman law and jurisdiction."⁴³⁴ Italy was an expansion of Rome.

Outside of Rome and Italy, there were two categories of communities: *coloniae* and *municipia*. The former took a higher place in this hierarchical categorization of communities. In other words, *Coloniae* mirrored the religious institutions of Rome itself more closely than *municipia*.⁴³⁵ They received religious regulations directly from Rome, but even without direct instructions, Roman *coloniae* voluntarily followed Roman models. They adapted Roman official deities including the deified emperor and syncretized them with their particular local religious traditions. They built their own Capitulum based on the model of the Capitoline temple at Rome and offered ritual honors to the Capitoline triad, who were synthesized with their local deities. In this way, Roman *coloniae* displayed their Roman piety and expressed their own version of Roman identity.⁴³⁶

Outside of *coloniae*, at the outermost part of the web, were towns falling under the status of *municipia*. In principle, they did not have a Capitulum or the institution of the Roman imperial cult in their towns, although they still shared some of the Roman religious features of *coloniae* in the way that "their principal priesthoods, for example, were named after, and modeled on, Roman institutions--*pontifices*, *augures* and

434. Ibid., 322.

435. Ibid., 328.

436. Ibid., 328-33.

haruspices."⁴³⁷ An interesting fact is that later, from the second century A.D. onwards, some of *municipia* began to build Capitolia and performed the cult found previously only in *coloniae*. This was a way for *municipia*, "to promote their recognition as an independent community," and to acquire higher prestige, honor and status in the empire.⁴³⁸ In this hierarchization of communities, from Rome to towns in provincial areas, with different privileges and honors for each level, we find the framework of implementing 'Romanization' through the imperial cult.

Furthermore, this hierarchization was secured by different levels of organization of elite groups in each community. Rome, for instance, had the Arval Brothers, a college of priests in the imperial period.⁴³⁹ To be sure, the Arval Brothers had existed before the imperial period as a less-significant organization, yet it changed its nature after Octavian himself joined as a member. Since then, the Arval Brothers drew its membership "from the most prominent members of the senate," becoming one of the most significant religious associations in Rome. Besides, presiding over the ceremonies in honor of Dea Dia, which was their traditional role, they began to take charge of 'the imperial rituals,' such as annual vows, sacrifices 'for the emperor's safety,' and sacrifices to mark imperial birthdays, accessions, deaths, and deification.⁴⁴⁰ This role indicates that the Arval

437. Ibid., 334.

438. Ibid., 336.

439. Ibid., 194-96.

440. Ibid., 195.

Brothers were the new political-religious elite group in Rome that emerged with the inception of the imperial cult.

Outside Rome, especially in Roman *coloniae*, religious elites such as the *victimarii* (who killed the animals), the *haruspices* (who took the omens from the animals' entrails), the *pontifices* (priests who took charge of most of the ritual matters), and the *augures* (politicians who ensured the correct performance of the rituals) emerged with new prosperity at the rise of the imperial cult. This combination of religious and political powers in *coloniae* was the nucleus of the power structure of the local communities. The situation in the towns with non-*coloniae* status was somewhat different. There were no official imperial cults, nor Roman religious elites. There were, however, still two categories of people who partook in the cult: the army and Roman citizens.

Archaeological discoveries of the Twentieth Palmyrene, stationed at Dura Europus, illustrate that the official religious life of the army in provincial areas was "predominantly Roman."⁴⁴¹ Although the men in the army enjoyed freedom of religious diversity as seen in discoveries of various temple-buildings at the site, all men in the army were supposed to participate in honoring the reigning emperor, as well as his family and predecessors. Likewise, Roman citizens in the communities with lower status than *coloniae*, where there was no official Roman cult or temple, honored the emperor

441. Ibid., 324ff.

with any possible means (e.g., private feasts).⁴⁴² For men in the army and Roman citizens in towns with the status of lesser-than-*coloniae*, the imperial cult was the way to distinguish themselves from the non-citizen subjects of Rome.

This hierarchical ordering of communities shows how the Roman Empire wove the web of the imperial power using the imperial cult. Not everyone could entertain the cult and its benefits. Only the privileged could. The degree of that privilege was decided according to the geographical and relational distance to Rome. The closer to Rome, the more privilege was received. In return for their 'Roman' status, the privileged displayed their loyalty to Rome by mimicking the imperial cult of Rome as closely as possible. For example, the calendars discovered in Italy, various Roman *coloniae*, and the army station at Dura Europus all commonly witness that they celebrated the Roman festivals on the same days and in the same manner as the celebrations in Rome.⁴⁴³ In other words, when the Roman emperor, the *pontifex maximus* of the cult, led service in Rome, those who were in 'Roman' status across the empire simultaneously offered the same kind of ritual to the emperor, via sacrifice, libation, and vows for the well-being of the emperor and the empire.⁴⁴⁴ Even in provincial areas far from Rome, their ritual presence signaled the presence of the emperor's power over those areas. Thus, through the imperial cult and

442. Ibid., 336.

443. Ibid., 325, 328ff.

444. Concerning the emperor as *pontifex maximus*, the head priest of the cult, see Ibid., 186-92.

the related socio-religious structures, the Roman Empire ensured Roman identity across the empire. The Roman means to build and ensure their identity was, as seen in this chapter, thorough and complicated. How then did Christians build and ensure their identity in the midst of the Roman rigor for maintaining social integration? We will find answers in the following chapters.

Roman Persecution and Christian Reaction

The imperial cult was the Roman way to secure the *pax deorum*, which was a religious expression for social integration and social solidarity in the imperial period. The imperial cult, which was deeply rooted in widespread archaic ideas and cults, unified the vast territory of the empire into one integrated entity.⁴⁴⁵ This integration was the imperial version of the *pax deorum*. Anyone who refused to become a part of it was regarded and persecuted as a transgressor of the *pax deorum*. This was why early Christians faced severe persecutions. In the eyes of Romans, when Christians refused to participate in the imperial cult, the issue was not just a conflict between polytheism and monotheism. More, it was about becoming a part of this social integration. Elizabeth Castelli elaborates the social implication of a refusal to the Roman sacrificial system:

Sacrifice was the consummate gesture of piety and, at the level of ritual, it helped to maintain networks of relationship and patterns of order that were simultaneously social, political, and religious. At the level of the symbolic, it signaled a commitment to traditional values, public institutions, and hierarchically

445. See Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ*, 29ff.

organized social and political relationships . . . Therefore, a refusal to participate in this sacrificial order--for whatever reason--would have been viewed by the vast majority of the empire's population as a rejection of all manner of socially ordering elements--kinship, gender identities, and so on--and therefore as utterly nonsensical, irrational, foolhardy, impudent, sacrilegious, and antisocial.⁴⁴⁶

This explains the real issue behind the persecution: at stake was social integration rather than purely religious matters.

In fact, Romans had generous attitudes towards non-Roman gods, as mentioned above. It was true as well with the imperial cult. For example, in provincial communities, the imperial cult was synthesized with the various cults of local deities. We have cases in certain area that the sacrifice was offered to Magna Mater on behalf of the emperor.⁴⁴⁷ In other places, especially in the western provinces, "a wide range of deities was invoked as protectors of the emperor or as his equals."⁴⁴⁸ In these areas, the emperor appeared with such titles as "Saturnus Augustus," "Silvanus Augustus," or "Mars Augustus."⁴⁴⁹ In short, Romans did not care whatever god one believed in; as long as one displayed his/her piety by offering the sacrifice for the emperor, he/she would be counted as an insider of the *pax deorum*. This was why Jews, unlike Christians, were not persecuted: they offered the sacrifice for the emperor three times a year.⁴⁵⁰ For this very

446. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 50-51.

447. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 348.

448. Ibid., 351-52.

449. Ibid., 352.

450. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 209, 221. Furthermore, in certain areas, Jews stood on the Roman side in persecuting Christians. See Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*,

reason, Christians, unlike the rest of the contemporary religious constituents, were under severe persecution in the imperial period. When Christians refused to make vows by the name of the emperor and offer sacrifice and libation for the emperor, in the eyes of the majority of Romans, what they refused was not just their faith but also the essential unifying factor across the empire.

Accounts of martyrdom confirm this understanding. For example, Polycarp's martyrdom described in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* reveals this side of the martyrdom of early Christians. In the account, the proconsul asked Polycarp, "to say 'Lord Caesar,' and to offer sacrifice, and to be saved,"⁴⁵¹ and repeatedly tried to persuade Polycarp to, "Swear by the genius of Caesar," and "Take the oath."⁴⁵² Interestingly, the proconsul never asked Polycarp to abandon his Christian faith. The issue was not whether Polycarp had a different faith or not. The issue was whether Polycarp displayed a willingness to accept the social reality that placed the emperor at the center. Likewise, in the martyrdom accounts of Apollonius, Pionios, Perpetua, and the Christians at Madaura and Scilli, the martyrs, "typically received numerous invitations to sacrifice and opportunities to reconsider--and their refusal to take advantage of this leniency made them all the more infuriating in the eyes of the authorities."⁴⁵³ Again, the core of the

334.

451. *Hist. eccl.* IV, xv. 15.

452. *Hist. eccl.* IV. xv. 18, 20.

453. Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ*, 35; G. W Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23ff; Frend,

issue was not their Christian faith, but their acceptance/refusal of Roman identity, which was symbolized in the sacrifice for the emperor.

Besides the matter of participation in sacrifice, we can observe a few other examples that illustrate the identity clash between Christians and Romans. The scenario of the emperor's visiting imperial provinces is one of them. When the emperor visited a province as the *soter* and *kyrios*, the people in the province celebrated the arrival of the emperor as *epiphany* and *euaggelion*, and commemorated the event with a festival. The first thing that the emperor did was to go to the civic temple and offer sacrifice to the gods as the *high priest*. In this description, the italic terms had completely different meanings for Romans and Christians, forming "polemical parallelism."⁴⁵⁴ Christians had their own *soter*, swore by their own *kyrios*, evangelized with their own *euaggelion*, and waited for the coming of another kingdom beside the Roman Empire. Thus, in the eyes of Romans, the problem with Christians was that they became a menace to the unity of the empire.

Another example is the Christians' contest against Romans over the spectacles. Christians accused the spectacles, which represented the *mos Romanorum* (Roman method) of religious celebrations, as being those of barbarians and demon-possessors.⁴⁵⁵

Martyrdom and Persecution, 312ff.

454. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, 213; Klauck, *Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 298, 328.

455. For details of the spectacles such as *theatron*, *ludi*, *fabular*, *munera*, *circus*, and *venations*, see, Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 169ff. For degrading Roman gods

We find such criticism in Minucius Felix and Tertullian. Caecilius' complaint in Minucius Felix' *Octavius* well shows the Roman accusation against Christians:

Meanwhile in anxious doubt you deny yourselves wholesome pleasures; you do not attend the shows; you take no part in the processions; fight shy of public banquets; abhor the sacred games, meats from the victims, drinks poured in libation on the altars. So frightened are you of the gods whom you deny!⁴⁵⁶

In the eyes of Romans, the abstemious attitude of Christians impeded the unity of the empire and generated hostility against them. Moreover, Christians not only withdrew from Roman religious/cultural practices, but also denounced them as perfidious, cruel, and impudent things.⁴⁵⁷ For example, Tertullian's *De Spectaculis* presents this kind of stern reaction on the part of Christians. Tertullian jeered at the bloody barbarianism in Roman spectacles and debased Roman gods by describing them as demons, monsters and devils.⁴⁵⁸ Subsequently, Tertullian asserted that Christians should keep away from such madness, not attending the circus and games.⁴⁵⁹ For Christians, Tertullian concluded, there was only one true spectacle, the coming of the Lord.⁴⁶⁰ In that spectacle, Tertullian asserted, the situation would be reversed and the persecutors would turn out to be

as demons, see, for example, Tertullian, *Spect.* 8.

456. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 12.

457. Tertullian, *Spect.* 29.

458. Tertullian, *Apol.* 15. 4-6; *Spect.* 9.

459. Tertullian, *Spect.* 16.

460. Tertullian, *Spect.* 30.

persecuted:

And, then, the poets trembling before the judgement-seat, not of Rhadamanthus, not of Minos, but of Christ whom they never looked to see! And then there will be the tragic actors to be heard, more vocal in their own tragedy; and the players to be seen, litter of limb by far in the fire; and then the charioteer to watch, red all over in the wheel of flame; and, next, the athletes to be gazed upon, not in their gymnasiums but hurled in the fire . . . I believe, things of greater joy than circus, theatre or amphitheatre, or any stadium.⁴⁶¹

The Roman spectacles, in which Christians refused to participate, were Roman devices to promote a sense of unity, nourish Roman pride and maintain Roman identity. When honors were offered in the spectacles to the Roman gods and the emperor, on whom the community was founded and on whose favor it depended, the participants were repeatedly reminded of to whom they belonged; when criminals were executed in the spectacles, the participants learned what was acceptable/unacceptable for Romans. In the imperial period, it was the emperor who financially supported these enormous entertainments "to keep such publicity and influence in this own hands."⁴⁶² Thus, through the spectacles, Romans enhanced Roman identity with the emperor at its center. And Christians, contrarily, enhanced their identity by refusing to participate in them. Christians developed their identity through the countercultural claims against the imperial cult and its associated socio-religious components. Consequently, Roman hostility against Christians soared.

461. Tertullian, *Spect.* 30.

462. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 171.

Martyrdom and 'Noble Death'

The dichotomy of Roman vs. Christian would have been an odd idea. As Castelli points out, "these two categories are not structurally parallel, nor are they in lived experience necessarily mutually exclusive."⁴⁶³ Furthermore, in terms of physical power and social dominance, these two parties were incomparable. Therefore, the clash between these two parties could not be understood within the framework of the typical clash between an empire and its subjects for subjugation and independence. The clash was not about territory and sovereignty, but about identity and status. Castelli explains this aspect of the clash: "Both are ideals that required constant reinscription, categories whose borders demanded heavy guarding and strategic shoring up through repeated and sustained rhetorical and ritual performances."⁴⁶⁴ This explanation is more adequate than that of de Ste. Croix who ascribes the persecution solely to the monotheism of Christians. It was not just Christians but also Romans who had 'boundaries' to maintain. Roman persecution of Christians was an attempt to maintain the cultural religious boundaries of the empire. In this sense, the best description of the clash is the dichotomy of Romanness vs. Christianness. It was an identity clash. While Romans used 'Romanization' and 'persecution' as their strategies, Christian counter-strategies to the Romans were, first, 'noble death' in the form of voluntary martyrdom and, second,

463. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 35.

464. Ibid., 35.

theorizing martyrdom as true sacrifice through the eucharistic meal. The goal of the Christian reaction was to delegitimize Roman imperial power and to form a Christian identity.

In *One Jesus Many Christs*, Gregory Riley explains why Christians accepted martyrdom with eagerness. His explanation begins with the heroic Christology: early Christians saw a hero in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus, like the heroes, was a man of "remarkable talents and accomplishments who had suffered horribly and unjustly and then been vindicated after death by God through resurrection and ascension to heaven."⁴⁶⁵ For Jesus' followers, who were very familiar with Hesiod's aforementioned Four Classes of Being and various accounts of heroes, accepting Jesus as a hero was as natural as Romans accepting the emperor as a divine. But Jesus, according to Riley, had a uniqueness that distinguished him from other heroes, that is, his "promise of eternal life for those who would follow him."⁴⁶⁶ Jesus became the hero on earth who conquered the power of death, not by avoiding death, but by suffering it and overcoming it through resurrection, and promised that anyone who followed him also could overcome death.⁴⁶⁷ This was a powerful persuasion for Jesus' followers and explained persecution from its receiving end. For many Christians, persecution was an opportunity to imitate their

465. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 139.

466. Ibid., 139.

467. Ibid., 202.

archegos.⁴⁶⁸ Riley writes:

The Christians were acting like heroes. Not all of them, of course, but many, and more and more of them as time went on. They learned to be heroes as from the stories of their ancestors, and from other Christians: Christians taught each other and encouraged each other to live and die like heroes. Persecution and false accusation and rumor worked; they turned people away from the new faith and back to the traditional gods and religions. But the behavior of those who died with courage and self-respect, who passed the test with their honor fully intact, made a mockery of the rumors and accusations, and the killing of obviously (otherwise) innocent people sickened the officials involved.⁴⁶⁹

Imitating their master in a heroic death in the belief of immortality after death was the way Christians coped with the persecution.⁴⁷⁰ In this belief, Christians were able to be courageous and even enthusiastic, when they stood before the horrific death imposed by the persecutor. They longed for the heroic death that their master exemplified. Later, Christians began to identify their *archegos* with not just a hero but God. Tertullian clearly stated this notion in his *Apology*:

Yet he who expects the true resurrection from God, is insane, if for God he suffers! But go zealously on, good presidents, you will stand higher with the people if you sacrifice the Christians at their wish, kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust; your injustice is the proof that we are innocent. Therefore God suffers that we thus suffer.⁴⁷¹

468. *archegos* = leader. For the religious significance of this term, see *Ibid.*, 201.

469. *Ibid.*, 197-8.

470. For example, in *The Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius*, Montanus, right before his martyrdom, taught his fellow Christians thus: "This then is what it means to suffer for Christ, to imitate Christ even in his words, and to give the greatest proof of one's faith" (14).

471. Tertullian, *Apol.* 50.

Thus, for Christians, their *archegos* who suffered martyrdom was God; thus, the promised prize for their heroic death--immortality--was surely guaranteed. This belief that their master was, "the God who had descended from heaven and lived as hero and savior," invited many Christians to follow the path that their master explored.⁴⁷²

Examples that show Christian enthusiasm for martyrdom are numerous. The earliest example is Ignatius, who instructed to his fellow Christians in Rome:

I write to all the churches and certify to all that I die willingly for God provided you do not hinder me. I exhort you: do not become an inopportune kindness for me; let me be the food of wild beasts through whom it is possible to attain God; I am the wheat of God, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread.⁴⁷³

Here, Ignatius wanted Christians in Rome not to intercede for him. He took his martyrdom as a means to reach God. Another example is found in the dialogue between Justin and the prefect Rusticus described in *The Acts of Justin and Companions*. After accounts in which Justin refused the prefect's request to offer a sacrifice to the emperor as a sign of loyalty to the emperor and confessed that he was a Christian, this dialogue follows:

The prefect turned to Justin: 'You are said to be learned and you think you know the true doctrine. Now listen: if you are scourged and beheaded, do you suppose that you will ascend to heaven?' 'I have confidence,' said Justin, 'that if I endure all this I shall possess his mansions. Indeed, I know that for all those who live a just life there awaits the divine gift even to the consummation of the whole world.' The prefect Rusticus said: 'You think, then, that you will ascend to heaven to receive certain worthy rewards?' 'I do not think,' said Justin, 'but I have accurate

472. Ibid., 138.

473. Ign. *Rom.* 4. 1.

knowledge and am fully assured of it.' 'Well then,' said the prefect Rusticus, 'let us come to the point at issue, a necessary and pressing business. Agree together to offer sacrifice to the gods.' 'No one of sound mind,' said Justin, 'turns from piety to impiety.' The prefect Rusticus said: 'If you do not obey, you will be punished without mercy.' Justin said: 'We are confident that if we suffer the penalty for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, for this is the confidence and salvation we shall have at the terrible tribunal of our Saviour and Master sitting in judgement over the whole world.' Similarly the other martyrs said, 'Do what you will. We are Christians and we do not offer sacrifice to idols.' The prefect Rusticus passed judgement, saying: 'Those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to yield to the emperor's edict are to be led away to be scourged and beheaded in accordance with the laws.' The holy martyrs went out to the customary spot glorifying God, and being beheaded fulfilled their testimony by their act of faith in our Saviour. Some of the faithful secretly took their bodies and buried them in a suitable place, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ working with them, to whom is glory for ever. Amen.⁴⁷⁴

This dialogue recounts the typical picture of Christian martyrdom, informing why Christians were persecuted, how they embraced their martyrdom and what they expected to gain through their death. One common feature of Justin's and virtually all Christian martyrologies is "the voluntary nature of the martyrs' impending deaths."⁴⁷⁵ The clearest manifestation of this nature was made through a confession of Vibia Perpetua, a female martyr at Carthage in North Africa: "We came to this of our own free will that our freedom should not be violated."⁴⁷⁶ The teachings of Tertullian, a contemporary

474. *The Acts of Justin and Companions*, 5-6. If not specified, all quotations of the martyrologies are from Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

475. Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom Among Jews and Christians in the Ancient World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 2.

476. *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 18.

Christian teacher in the Christian community of Perpetua, were in accord with Perpetua's confession. According to him, martyrdom was the only sure way of salvation, the second baptism in blood and a God-commanded duty of Christians.⁴⁷⁷ Tertullian writes:

Well, it is quite true that it is our desire to suffer, but it is in the way that the soldier longs for war. No one indeed suffers willingly, since suffering necessarily implies fear and danger. Yet the man who objected to the conflict, both fights with all his strength, and when victorious, he rejoices in the battle, because he reaps from it glory and spoil. It is our battle to be summoned to your tribunals that there, under fear of execution, we may battle for the truth.⁴⁷⁸

Thus, many Christians under persecution did not flee from the frightful death waiting for them. Rather, they willingly endured it.

De Ste. Croix called this eagerness of Christians, 'voluntary martyrdom.'⁴⁷⁹ With this title, however, he colored the eagerness of Christian martyrs with his anti-Christian sentiment, treating it as "an abnormal mentality" that "was a factor which, for obvious reasons, both contributed to the outbreak of persecution and tended to intensify it when already in being."⁴⁸⁰ Surely, Roman authorities were at first disturbed and upset about

477. Tertullian, *Mart.* 2; *Pat.* 13; *Scorp.* 2. Tertullian was a Church Father, whose works reflected the context of martyrdom, and who took extreme attitude to martyrdom. Among his contemporaries, Gnostics ridiculed martyrdom and the Alexandria school took the middle way between Tertullian and Gnostics. To compare the different attitudes, of Tertullian, Clement, Origen and Gnostics, to martyrdom, see Droge and Tabor, *A Noble Death*, 129ff; Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 347ff; Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, 59ff.

478. Tertullian, *Apol.* 50.

479. De Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?", 17ff.

480. Ibid., 17, 19.

this attitude of the Christians. As time went on, however, Romans admired Christian martyrdom, as described by Riley above. We find an example of the change in attitude from hostility to admiration in an account of an early martyr, Polycarp. It is reported that when Polycarp refused to swear by the Genius of Caesar and to offer sacrifice for him, the entire crowd in the stadium, Gentiles as well as Jews, cried out: "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teaches many not to sacrifice or worship."⁴⁸¹ The crowd shouted out with uncontrollable anger that Polycarp should be burned alive. When Polycarp was burned alive as they had asked, however, "the whole crowd was amazed that there should be so great a difference between the unbelievers and the elect."⁴⁸² Polycarp's martyrdom, "with courage and self-respect, who passed the test with their [his] honor fully intact," made the crowd's hostility change to admiration. This kind of death was not regarded as something abnormal at all. Yet, it commanded a transforming power over the people.

In antiquity, a willing death was a 'noble death.' The death of Polycarp and other martyrs fit well in this category. From a brief overview of 'noble death,' we can see how the death of martyrs had the power to transform both among Christians and in Roman society. The concept of 'noble death' in the Greco-Roman world was a concept firmly rooted in archaic traditions. The earliest example can be found in Homer's *Iliad*. When

481. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 12.

482. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 16.

Achilles heard of Patroklos' death, he resolved to return to the battle and kill Hektor in spite of the risk that he might lose his own life. Thetis, Achilles' mother, seeing the danger, tried to withhold Achilles, saying, "Then I must lose you my son, my child, by what you are saying, since it is decreed your death must come soon after Hektor's."⁴⁸³

Achilles answered her:

I must die soon, then; since I was not to stand by my companion when he was killed . . . Now I shall go, to overtake that killer of a dear life, Hektor; then I will accept my own death, at whatever time Zeus wishes to bring it about, and the other immortals . . . Now I must win excellent glory.⁴⁸⁴

Although Achilles did not die in the scope of the *Iliad*, he chose glory over a long life, showing the idea of a 'noble death' in the epic. Another example of a 'noble death' in the epic that shows the "choice to die for principle and with honor" is the death of Hektor.⁴⁸⁵ Despite his father Priam's appeal, ("Come then inside the wall, my child . . . yourself be robbed of your very life") and also despite knowing that Achilles would, "take no pity upon me, nor respect my position, but kill me naked so, as if I were a woman, once I stripped my armour from me," Hektor went out of the wall to fight against Achilles, and was killed by him "in glory in front of the city."⁴⁸⁶ These deaths in the Homeric epic were prototypes of the 'noble death' that were admired from generation to generation.

483. *Il.* 18. 95-6.

484. *Il.* 18. 98-121.

485. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 47.

486. *Il.* 22. 56, 123-5, 110.

Although there are scores of examples of 'noble deaths' in the Greco-Roman and Jewish sources, few scholars have attempted to define and articulate the characteristics of the 'noble death' based on such sources.⁴⁸⁷ In this regard, David Seeley's *The Noble Death* is an outstanding work.⁴⁸⁸ Seeley suggests five components of 'noble death' based on 4 Maccabees. The five components are, (1) obedience, (2) the overcoming of physical vulnerability, (3) a military setting, (4) vicariousness, or the quality of being beneficial for others, and (5) sacrificial metaphors.⁴⁸⁹ After defining these components, he persuasively shows that Paul's understanding of Jesus' death exactly fits in this category, having all five components. Unlike the Maccabean 'noble death,' whose context was a military occupation of Roman imperialism, some examples of 'noble death' in the Greco-Roman world did not necessarily have the third component above, as Seeley himself points out.⁴⁹⁰ In general, however, these five components provide a useful definition of 'noble death.'

487. Examples of 'noble death' in the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds are numerous. It is not necessary to list them here. For thorough surveys of 'noble death' in the Greco-Roman and Jewish sources, see Droge and Tabor, *Noble Death*; J. W. van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts From Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002). As to how the Hellenistic concept of 'noble death' was merged into the strand of Jewish traditions as seen in *Maccabees*, see the former above chapter 3.

488. David Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 28 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

489. *Ibid.*, 13.

490. For example, *Ibid.*, 138, 140.

Christian martyrdom under Roman imperialism had all these components.

Although the martyrs were disobedient to the order of the oath and the sacrifice, they remained obedient to the order that claimed their lives. They overcame their physical vulnerability and embraced tortuous deaths with admirable endurance. The context of martyrdom was by no means that of a war or a revolt, yet it always presupposed a military setting to a certain degree. Their deaths were regarded as beneficial for other Christians, and they employed sacrificial metaphors. Among these five components, the last two are the most important for the purpose of this dissertation. Martyrdom was regarded as 'beneficial' and 'sacrificial.' These two characteristics made Christian martyrdom powerful enough to bind Christians together in a hostile context. We will now elaborate on these two characteristics to see how Christian martyrdom became an effective countermeasure to imperial persecution.

Seeley uses "beneficial" not in the sense of expiation, but of vicariousness in a mimetic or imitative fashion.⁴⁹¹ Seeley chooses Eleazar's death in 2 *Maccabees* 6 as an example of a vicarious death. The last saying of Eleazar before his death and the author's comments after his death illustrate the vicarious nature of the martyrdom:

Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws. (6:27-8)

So in this way he died, leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation.

491. Ibid., 83. He clarifies that 'expiatory' means 'canceling the effects of sin' whereas 'vicarious' means 'on behalf of others.'

(6:31)

Based on this example, Seeley explains the vicariousness of 'noble death,' saying:

Eleazar's death, however, is special because it is a model or a paradigm. Eleazar offers a pattern of righteousness by remaining obedient despite Antiochus' tortures. In their own efforts to stay faithful to the 'holy laws,' people need only to look to his example. His death is described almost as a precious bequest to the Jewish nation. By copying his behaviour, others draw benefit from it. The mode of vicariousness which his death possesses may therefore be called mimetic, since it is conveyed via the process of imitation.⁴⁹²

Then, by what means was the vicarious benefit of a 'noble death' imparted to others?

Seeley's answer is "re-enactment."⁴⁹³ The martyr's companions and the readers of the martyrdom account literally, imaginatively and, later, ritually re-enacted the death and were thus strengthened to overcome the hostile reality. In this way, the 'noble death' empowered and transformed its admirers.

This was why early Christians produced, preserved and circulated early martyrologies.⁴⁹⁴ Reading Christian martyrologies, we recognize that they are by no

492. Ibid., 89.

493. Ibid., 14-5.

494. Because most martyrologies were produced in the medieval era, we have a limited number of early ones. For the complete collection of the early martyrologies, see the aforementioned Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. Another resource for the early martyrologies is Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which includes: the martyrdoms of Polycarp and Justin (IV), Christians in Gaul, Apollonius (V), Origen's pupils and Christians in Alexandria (VI), Christians in Caesarea (VII), Christians in Nicomedia and Christians in Egypt, Phoenicia, Thebais, Phrygia, and Phileas (VIII). For an example of historical critical analyses of the early martyrologies, see Gary A Bisbee, *Pre-Decian Acts of Martyrs and Commentarii* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

means 'objective' historical documents. As Gary Bisbee observes, in the martyrologies, "what actually happened" and what was "remembered to have happened" were often quite different.⁴⁹⁵ Most of the accounts show fictional factors that emphasize the miraculous and dramatic aspects of the martyrdom. For example, in Polycarp's martyrdom, Polycarp was not hurt by the fire so that an executioner had to stab him with a dagger.⁴⁹⁶ In the vision of Perpetua's martyrdom, Perpetua, 22 years-old, newly married, and the mother of an infant son, "became a man" in the arena as she was stripped of her clothing in preparation for the gladiatorial fight.⁴⁹⁷ Exaggeration and dramatization are present in these descriptions. However, these factors do not necessarily mean that Christian martyrologies do not have authentic historical materials at their core. G. W. Bowersock, based on the martyrologies of Pionios, Polycarp, and Perpetua, discusses how the authentic materials were incorporated into the fictive world of the martyrologies.⁴⁹⁸ According to him, there were three forms of documents that led to "a reasonable assessment of the historical value" of the martyrologies: the martyrs' own writing, the writing of eyewitnesses, and the formal protocol of interrogations conducted by Roman magistrates. From these historical sources, the authors (or, redactors) wrote, re-wrote and expanded the martyrologies. The question is, then, what

495. Ibid., 3.

496. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. 15-6.

497. *The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas*. 3. 2.

498. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, 23ff.

goal drove this process, if not objectivity? We can find the answer from an early martyrology itself: "for men's strength."⁴⁹⁹ Early Christians "taught each other and encouraged each other" not to apostatize in front of the cruel death, but that they should pay the price to be a Christian.⁵⁰⁰ The martyrologies, especially the dramatic descriptions of the 'noble death' of the martyrs, served this purpose. As the Christians under persecutions heard and read the accounts of the 'noble deaths' of their fellow Christians, they strengthened themselves with mimetic re-enactment of the death of the martyrs. This re-enactment was imaginative. They did not have to literally die the same death of martyrs right away: they imaginatively and ritually died with the martyrs. This re-enactment, however, empowered the Christians to be ready for their own 'noble death.'

In this regard, Elizabeth Castelli's *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* is of great importance. Castelli explores how early Christians formed their identity through the collective memory of the suffering of their fellow Christians. Concerning the topic that we discussed above, one significant contribution of Castelli is her articulation of how early Christians "theorized" martyrdom to contest the Roman

499. *The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas*, preface.

500. A quotation from *The Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius* illustrates this aspect of 'noble death':

Next he criticized the hasty desertion by apostates, and he put off their pardon until full repentance and the decision of Christ. Those also who had kept the faith he urged to retain their full adherence, saying: 'Hold your ground courageously, my brothers, and fight perseveringly. *You have good models*; let not the treachery of apostates lead you to ruin, but rather let our own endurance strengthen you for the crown (14, emphasis mine).

imperial power. The contestations were over the notions of law and sacrifice, "two foundational aspects of civic and religious existence that are both sources for metanarratives concerning justice."⁵⁰¹ These two points, legality and piety, over which the contestation happened, were two crucial values that sustained the empire. Therefore, Christian reinterpretations of the character and nature of these two values through theorizing martyrdom posed a threat to the political order, social stability, and religious conformity of the empire, intensifying the conflict between "Romanness" and "Christianness." Through their accounts of the martyrs, Christians asserted that the 'lawless' ones were not the Christians but the crowd and the authorities who persecuted them. In almost every early martyrology, we find the argument that Christians were righteous whereas the madness and cruelty of the persecution lacked a precise legal foundation.⁵⁰² Christians also, by interpreting the 'noble deaths' of the martyrs as true sacrifices to God, undermined the Romans' central accusation for the persecution, i.e., atheism. What Christians refused, they claimed, was not 'sacrifice' itself; Christians simply "removed themselves from the position of agent (sacrificer) to the position of victim (sacrificed)."⁵⁰³ This reinterpretation of sacrifice, from "performing sacrifice" to

501. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 34.

502. This emphasis appears almost every early martyrology, i.e., *The Acts of Ptolemaeus and Lucius*, *The Acts of Justin and his Companions*, and *The Passion of Julius the Veteran*. For details, see Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 43ff.

503. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 51.

"becoming sacrifice,"⁵⁰⁴ provided a powerful persuasion that disrupted the Roman ideas of meaningful sacrifice. Thus, the Christian 'noble death' as well as the 'noble death' of their master was the basis for their counter-identity against the empire. Whereas Romans built and secured their identity through extensive socio-religious structures, which were so real and powerful that it seemed impossible to be outside of its control, Christians strove to build and secure their identity through the death of martyrs. However, the death itself would have been less powerful if it were not followed by convincingly powerful stories and interpretations. Castelli argues, "at the heart of the conflict between early Christians and Roman imperial authorities is precisely this conflict . . . over whose story would dominate the cultural scene."⁵⁰⁵ The key to such Christian arguments was that the death of martyrs was the true sacrifice. Here the significance of the eucharistic meal as the place where the stories and interpretations were produced, repeated and circulated arises.

The Eucharistic Meal as True Sacrifice

As Seeley pointed out above, sacrificial metaphors were one of the features of the 'noble death.' For an example in the Greco-Roman context, Seeley quotes Tacitus' description of the forced suicide of Thrasea, a respected senator who fell under Nero's

504. Ibid., 52.

505. Ibid., 34.

wrath.⁵⁰⁶ In the description, Thrasea cut his arteries with a knife; when the blood had begun to sprinkle to the ground, he said to the quaestor nearer: "We are making a libation to Jove the Liberator."⁵⁰⁷ Early Christians, confronting the Roman sacrificial system, theorized the martyrdom of their fellow Christians to be the true sacrifice. Unlike the example of Thrasea, however, the death of Christians were theorized in an indirect manner. Throughout the entire collection of martyrologies of Musurillo, no martyr made such a direct remark as "this [blood] is a libation" or "this [body] is a sacrifice" as Therasea did.

In fact, Christians faced a dilemma. On the one hand, they needed to argue that the death of the martyr was the true sacrifice: on the other hand, they needed to do it without falling into three particular pitfalls. First, Christians, with the death of the martyr, did not want to give the impression of a human-sacrifice, which was one of the accusations against them from their contemporaries.⁵⁰⁸ Second, the scene of the martyrdom was abhorrently bloody, and Christians were aware that that kind of bloody sacrifice could not stand with this sacrificial ideal, the bloodless sacrifice, which had begun to gain in importance in the second century with the rise of Neoplatonism.⁵⁰⁹

506. Seeley, *Noble Death*, 135.

507. Tacitus, *Annals*. 16.34, quoted in Seeley, *Noble Death*, 135.

508. Porphyry is an example. He criticized Christians for "bestly sacrificing human beings." For details, see Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Thought* (London: Routledge, 2005), 157-59.

509. Lucian and Porphyry were two well known examples of this trend. Their

Third, Christians had the belief that Jesus was the ultimate and decisive sacrifice that had fulfilled the needs of all other sacrifices: therefore, it would have been self-contradictory for Christians to keep offering sacrifices through the deaths of the martyrs. To avoid these pitfalls, Christians needed to interpret the death of the martyr, first, in the form of bloodless sacrifice, second, as a continuation of the death of Jesus Christ.

Christians found the solution in the eucharistic meal: it provided the ritual and the theology that theorized the death of martyrs without being caught in those pitfalls described above. In other words, Christian martyrdom was not directly claimed as the true sacrifice; rather, the eucharistic meal was declared as such, and the death of the martyr was interpreted in terms of the eucharistic language. We have literary evidence for the link between the eucharistic meal and true sacrifice as early as Clement of Rome, who maintained that the Eucharist offered by properly ordained officials replaced sacrifices at Jerusalem.⁵¹⁰ After Clement, Ignatius went further to use a eucharistic metaphor for his martyrdom, seeing himself as "God's wheat," and offering himself as "a pure bread of Christ."⁵¹¹ In this simple metaphor, Ignatius interpreted his own martyrdom with clear eucharistic overtones, deftly combining the related themes of

opposition to the bloody sacrifice was based on their opposition to anthropomorphic theology. For the transition of the sacrificial ideal from the bloody to the bloodless, see *Ibid.*, 138-60. Also see, Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 78ff.

510. Clement, *1 Clem.* 41. Cf. Elaine H. Pagels, "'The Demiurge and His Archons': A Gnostic View of the Bishop and Presbyters?," *Harvard Theological Review* 69, nos. 3-4 (1976): 301-24.

511. Ign. *Rom.* 4. 1; *Pol.* 6. 1.

martyrdom, sacrifice, and imitation of Christ, into one single entity, i.e., the eucharistic bread.⁵¹² In this manner, Christians expressed their superiority, as a fulfillment of civil religion, to the Roman imperial cult that was based on bloody sacrifice.

Later, patristic writers articulated further the deaths of martyrs with eucharistic themes. Tertullian has been regarded as the first patristic writer to provide evidence for the connection between the Eucharist and the death of martyrs, but Tertullian's connection is indirect and somewhat obscure.⁵¹³ Instead, we turn to Cyprian, since he provides clearer evidence for this connection. In a letter he wrote in exile under the Decian persecution, Cyprian described the confessors as "grains of wheat" that had been "placed in the Lord's threshing-floor" and as "the grape which shall hereafter flow into the cups." Cyprian went on:

You, rich bunches out of the Lord's vineyard, and branches with fruit already ripe, trodden by the tribulation of worldly pressure, fill your wine-press in the torturing prison, and shed your blood instead of wine; brave to bear suffering, you willingly drink the cup of martyrdom. Thus the year rolls on with the Lord's servants, — thus is celebrated the vicissitude of the seasons with spiritual deserts, and with celestial rewards.⁵¹⁴

Cyprian enhanced Ignatius' eucharistic language for martyrdom by reflecting the brutal nature of the Decian persecution. Furthermore, in other letters of Cyprian, we find a direct link between the eucharistic meal and the anniversaries of the deaths of martyrs

512. Contrarily, Polycarp related his martyrdom with the eucharistic cup. See, *The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, 14.

513. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 101.

514. Cyprian, *Epist.* 15. 2. Also see, *Epist.* 36. 2.

and confessors:

Finally, also, take note of their days on which they depart, that we may celebrate their commemoration among the memorials of the martyrs . . . and there are celebrated here by us oblations and sacrifices for their commemorations, which things, with the Lord's protection, we shall soon celebrate with you.⁵¹⁵

. . . we always offer sacrifices for them, as you remember, as often as we celebrate the passions and days of the martyrs in the annual commemoration.⁵¹⁶

From these statements of Cyprian, we learn that in the eucharistic meal the death of martyrs, not just the death of Jesus, were commemorated.⁵¹⁷

In fact, the deaths of martyrs were not just commemorated, but also theorized in connection with the eucharistic meal. The logic was simple: as Jesus became the true sacrifice through his death, so the martyrs became the true sacrifice.⁵¹⁸ The power of this

515. Cyprian *Epist.* 36. 2.

516. Cyprian, *Epist.* 33.3.

517. Along with Cyprian, Optatus, a bishop in the fourth century, who contended against Donatists, provided a clue for a visual understanding of the eucharistic practice combined with the celebration of the death of martyrs. According to him, Donatists "kiss a bone of a martyr," before they partook the bread and cup. From this report, we picture that relics of martyrs found a place in the eucharistic meal and played an important role in the Christian rite. See, Optatus. *Against the Donatists*, I. 16.

518. This logic was well articulated by Origen:

For just as those who served the altar according to the Law of Moses thought they were ministering forgiveness of sins to the people by the blood of goats and bulls [Heb. 9:13, 10:4; Ps 50:13], so also the souls of those who have been beheaded for their witness to Jesus [Rev. 20:4, 6:9] do not serve the heavenly altar in vain and minister forgiveness of sins to those who pray. At the same time we also know that just as the High Priest Jesus the Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice [cf. Heb. 5:1, 7:27, 8:3, 10:12], so also the priests of whom He is High Priest offer themselves as a sacrifice. This is why they are seen near the altar as near their own place. Moreover, blameless priests served the Godhead by offering

logic is in its implication that as Jesus triumphed over the world, so the martyrs and the Christians who partook in the eucharistic meal triumphed over the world. Cyprian writes:

A severer and a fiercer fight is now threatening, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with uncorrupted faith and robust courage, considering that they drink the cup of Christ's blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ.⁵¹⁹

This was a powerful "re-enactment" of the deaths of Jesus and martyrs for the Christians under persecution. When the Christians ate and drank the eucharistic bread and cup, Christ was in them, and they were in Christ: additionally, by refusing to participate in the imperial feast and by partaking in the eucharistic meal, Christians experienced a "re-enactment" of the deaths of martyrs and identified themselves with the martyrs, who were considered to be the true sacrifice.⁵²⁰ Thus, the identity-conflict between Romans and Christians gradually centered around the contestation between the imperial sacrifice versus the eucharist meal. Cyprian states this contestation most clearly:

Let us take these arms, let us fortify ourselves with these spiritual and

blameless sacrifices, while those who were blemished and offered blemished sacrifices and whom Moses described in Leviticus were separated from the altar [Lev. 21: 17-21]. And who else is the blameless priest offering a blameless sacrifice than the person who holds fast his confession and fulfills every requirement the account of martyrdom demands? (Origen, *Mart.* 30.)

. . . it may be that as we have been purchased by the precious blood Jesus . . . so same will be ransomed by the precious blood of martyrs . . . (Origen, *Mart.* 50.)

519. Cyprian, *Epist.* 55. 1.

520. Cf. Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom*, Patristic Monograph Series, no. 5 (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), esp., chap. 10.

heavenly safeguards, that in the most evil day we may be able to withstand, and to resist the threats of the devil . . . let us also arm the right hand with the sword of the Spirit, that it may bravely reject the deadly sacrifices; that, mindful of the Eucharist, the hand which has received the Lord's body may embrace the Lord Himself, hereafter to receive from the Lord the reward of heavenly crowns.⁵²¹

The white-robed cohort of Christ's soldiers is here, who in the fierce conflict have broken the ferocious turbulence of an urgent persecution, having been prepared for the suffering of the dungeon, armed for the endurance of death. Bravely you have resisted the world: you have afforded a glorious spectacle in the sight of God; you have been an example to your brethren that shall follow you. That religious voice has named the name of Christ, in whom it has once confessed that it believed; those illustrious hands, which had only been accustomed to divine works, have resisted the sacrilegious sacrifices; those lips, sanctified by heavenly food after the body and blood of the Lord, have rejected the profane contacts and the leavings of the idols.⁵²²

For Christians, the imperial feast was "deadly" and involved "sacrilegious" sacrifices, whereas Christians sacrifices (i.e., the eucharistic meal), were "heavenly food" that guaranteed "heavenly crowns." The imperial feast was "the leavings of the idols," whereas the eucharistic meal sanctified its partakers. Now, the identity-conflict between the Romans and the Christians came to be a matter of what they ate.

Meat vs. Bread

Thus, in the imperial period, there were two rituals in competition for control of the cultural scene. One was the imperial cult, whose priest was the Roman emperor, whose aspiration was the *pax deorum*, and which was sustained by all imperial socio-

521. Cyprian, *Epist.* 55. 9.

522. Cyprian, *Laps.* 2.

religious structures; and the other was the eucharistic meal, which was grounded upon only the noble death of a master and his followers, which provided no social privilege to its partakers but the promise of eternity.⁵²³ Although these two rituals were very different in scale and influence, they shared common aspects. The following table demonstrates how the bare-bone structure of two rituals were the same.⁵²⁴

the imperial cult	the eucharistic meal
1. the preparation with introductory rituals	1. the offertory: bread and wine are 'taken' and placed on the table together
2. immolation, transferring the victim from the human sphere to the divine	2. the prayer: the president gives thanks to God over bread and wine together
3. the slaughter of the animal	3. the fraction: the bread is broken
4. the sacred meal.	4. the communion: the bread and wine are distributed together

Although they used different language, both basically followed this order: preparing the 'sacrifice' - offering it to the divine - having a communal meal. In both, a symbolic portion of the sacrifice (e.g., the aroma in the imperial cult and the prayer in the eucharistic meal) was offered upward to the divine, and the actual sacrificial food was for human consumption.⁵²⁵ Both rituals also culminated in eating and drinking.

That the meal followed a sacrifice and consisted of sacrificial food in the first

523. For the emperor's role as the priest, see Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 186ff.

524. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans*, 115; Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 48.

525. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans*, 115, 132.

instance is a quintessential feature of ancient religion. This was practiced from the very beginning of Greek religion, as shown by Antonaccio's archaeological work on tomb cults and hero cults in early Greece. For example, at Nichoria in Messenia, Antonaccio's team found a circular structure containing, "quantities of fineware and coarse pottery, and bones of deer, sheep, goat, pig, dog, and bovids."⁵²⁶ This circular structure was identified not as an altar for the dead or the gods, but as a set-up for the ritual dining of those who participated in the ritual. From the beginning of Greek religion, eating and drinking were the main components of the given religion for its participants. Later, in the imperial cult, the feast even exceeded the aspect of sacrifice. Price states, "a decline in the religious significance of sacrifices from the mid third century B. C. is marked by an increase in the importance of the accompanying feasts. Sacrifices became merely an excuse for a good dinner."⁵²⁷ Consumption of the sacrificial food by the participants was the highlight of the sacrificial ritual. If sacrifices were consumed only by the divine, 'what they eat' would have hardly been an issue. As long as humans consumed sacrifices, however, the matter of 'what they eat' came to be of great significance: sacrifices served not only to express religious piety but also brought the social implications of that specific food to the table, as already discussed.

The imperial cult partook in the animal sacrifice; therefore, the participants ate

526. Antonaccio, *Archaeology of Ancestors*, 205.

527. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 229.

meat. The emperor Julian commented on this relation of the imperial cult and animal sacrifice:

And among other nations also many other animals are offered in the mystic cults; and sacrifices of that sort take place publicly in their cities once or twice a year. But that is not the custom in the sacrifices which we honour most highly, in which alone the gods deign to join us and to share our table. In those most honoured sacrifices we do not offer fish, for the reason that we do not tend fish, nor look after the breeding of them, and we do not keep flocks of fish as we do sheep and cattle. For since we foster these animals and they multiply accordingly, it is only right that they should serve for all our uses and above all for the sacrifices that we honour most.⁵²⁸

Offering animals and eating meat after the ritual was a long standing custom in the Greco-Roman religions. From the earliest tomb cult in the Bronze era, the main sacrifice was a sheep or an ox, although cows, pigs goats and hares have also been discovered as sacrifices.⁵²⁹ The Greek hero cult inherited this sacrificial tradition, offering exclusively animal victims to their heroes.⁵³⁰ The imperial cult did not differ from these traditions; although sometimes libations, ritual cakes, and the burning of incense enriched the sacrificial rituals, the main sacrifice was always a bull.⁵³¹ Thus, the participants of the imperial cult enjoyed opportunities to eat meat on account of the cult.

Contrarily, most of Christians did not eat meat. As mentioned in the introduction,

528. *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*, 176d-177a, quoted in Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans*, 122.

529. Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 112.

530. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 218.

531. *Ibid.*, 208.

in *Ascetic Eucharist*, McGowan surveys the food and drink in early Christian ritual meals and concludes that Christians ate a variety of food beside bread and wine but refused to eat meat:

Likewise those who make use of oil, salt, and vegetables in their regular community eucharistic meals are characterized by uncompromising rejection of the wider pagan society, including its food and especially its meat, and use their meals as a sign of that rejection. The prominence of oil, vegetables, and salt in these descriptions seems to be a means of emphasizing the absence of meat.⁵³²

Christian communal rejection of eating meat was a very radical shift from their ritual and dietary traditions, considering that in their cultural context--both in Hellenistic and Jewish culture--meat consumption was an unbroken tradition, especially in the ritual feasts.⁵³³ In this sense, Christian rejection of meat consumption was not a natural development, but an intentional decision to avoid being a part of Roman identity.

McGowan writes:

Use or avoidance of particular foods had implications not only as to the wealth or status of the eaters, but for their positions with regard to the religious and social norms of the day. Meat and wine in particular were crucial dietary issues: consumption of these was not merely a sign of participation in the dominant culture of sacrifice, but quite literally effected that participation.⁵³⁴

For Christians, rejection of meat consumption was a sign of a willingness to suffer for Christian identity rather than to be assimilated into the dominant Roman one.

532. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 140.

533. For meat consumption in the ancient Israel culture, see MacDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat?*, esp., 61ff.

534. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 88.

Instead, Christians ate bread. Although the food and drink in the eucharistic meals were more diverse than it was once believed, bread was always the main element. Therefore, bread symbolized how the Christian meals contested against the imperial feasts. In fact, bread was a food "conceptually opposed to sacrificial meat."⁵³⁵ As early as Hesiod's *Works and Days* and the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis, there is an observable contest between vegetarianism and carnivorousness.⁵³⁶ These mythic accounts might have been the conceptual backgrounds of the contest between meat and bread. Our concern, however, is the practical effect of choosing bread over meat. How did eating bread differ from eating meat? What were the social implications that attached to these ritual food respectively? We can summarize four contesting aspects of bread and meat in the imperial era.

First, bread was associated with bloodless sacrifice and meat with bloody sacrifice. As we discussed above, the rise of Neoplatonism changed the social consensus about superior sacrifices: bloody sacrifices came to be regarded as barbarian whereas bloodless sacrifices began to be accepted as ideal. This change was profound since it originated in a change of theology: Neoplatonism--and also Neopythagoreanism--abandoned anthropomorphic beliefs about god and began to recognize god as a spiritual being who

535. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 63. Also see Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 57.

536. Carl W. Querbach, "Hesiod's Myth of the Four Races," *Classical Journal*, no. 1 (1985): 1-12.

did not need any material support. This new theology could not stand together with traditional bloody sacrifices. Lucian in the second century satirized animal sacrifice, "If anybody sacrifices, they [i.e., the gods] all have a feast, opening their mouths for the smoke and drinking the blood that is spilt at the altars, just like flies; but if they dine at home, their meal is nectar and ambrosia."⁵³⁷ The comparison of the gods who accepted bloody sacrifices like flies illustrates the decline of the anthropomorphic theology on which bloody sacrifices were rooted. Porphyry in the third century promoted the same kind of theological/sacrificial view through his cosmological hierarchy: "the highest god, who was pure spirit," had no need of material sacrifices whereas only *daimones*, who were inferior to the spiritual god, "rejoice in the drink-offerings and smoking meat."⁵³⁸ The point is that the anthropomorphic gods receiving bloody sacrifices became inferior to the spiritual god receiving bloodless sacrifices. Christians understood this shift, as Justin notes: "We assert that God has no need of bloody sacrifices, libations, and incense. We honor him by prayer and by words of thanksgiving and by praising his name whenever we consume anything."⁵³⁹

Second, bread was a staple food whereas meat was a festive food. Meat in antiquity was only available through sacrificial rituals. In the Hellenistic era, meat was

537. *On Sacrifices*, 9. Recited from Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Thought*, 140.

538. *Ibid.*, 143. Cf. Porphyry *On Abstinence*, 2.34-37.

539. Justin, *1 Apol.*, 13. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

purchasable in the market, but this meat also came from sacrificial sites.⁵⁴⁰ In other words, only public sacrificial occasions provided citizens with opportunities to have meat at the civil banquets that followed the rituals. MacMullen writes, "For most people, meat was a thing never eaten and wine to surfeit never drunk save as some religious setting permitted."⁵⁴¹ We can not specify how often public sacrifices were held, but it is obvious that they were not daily events. Contrarily, bread was a staple food, being served on virtually everyone's table every day. Christians could have their ritual meals as often as once a week or even every day.⁵⁴² This characteristic of bread bound Christians with the daily regularity of rituals.

Third, bread was more egalitarian, whereas meat was more hierarchical. The first reason that Christians chose bread for the main element for their ritual meals was that Jesus did so. The practical reason was economic: bread was cheap so that it could be served to everybody.⁵⁴³ Bread was abundant enough everywhere to be shared even by people of lower status. For example, the Arval Brothers, the Roman religious elites, opened their exclusive banquet of Dea Diva on the second of a three-day feast to "the

540. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 134.

541. Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 40.

542. Justin, *1 Apol.*, 65-67.

543. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 57.

slaves and freedmen of the brotherhood." Still they were given bread rather than meat.⁵⁴⁴

Bread was for everybody, from the prestigious to the lower classes. In ancient Athens, meat distribution was egalitarian; it was divided "equally" to symbolize the democracy of the city.⁵⁴⁵ Later in the Hellenistic era, however, "the social hierarchy was beginning to be reflected in the form of restricted access to sacrificial meals."⁵⁴⁶ Gilhus articulates:

It was not only a hierarchy of gods, humans and animals but also a hierarchy of social relations according to status and sex among humans that was played out in the ritual. The animal sacrifice was an opportunity for humans to share food on a festive occasion, but at the same time distinctions were made between different social groups. The difference in hierarchy and status is to be seen at all stages of the ritual process: in carrying out the sacrifice, in the distribution of the meat, and in the exclusion of certain groups.⁵⁴⁷

Considering this hierarchical social-religious environment, Christians' egalitarian tables among the citizens/slaves, the men/women, the haves/have-nots, and Greeks/Jews were attractive to those who were not in the top tier of the hierarchical ladder.

Fourth, the Christian bread offered more gender equality than Roman meat. Combined with the masculine labor role given to butchery, the gender hierarchy in the Greco-Roman world prevented women from participating in the meat sacrifice. Women seemed to "have stood (literally and otherwise) at some distance to the central event in most cases, but were made participants in a different sense through receiving the meat of

544. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 135.

545. Ibid., 132-3.

546. Ibid., 134.

547. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans*, 116.

the offering, mediated through the male citizens in the quantitatively expressed hierarchy."⁵⁴⁸ The entire process of the imperial sacrifice deepened gender discrimination. Contrarily, the Christian bread-meal opened a space for women's involvement. We have three reasons to make such a claim. First, the nature of labor-roles related to preparing bread was more gender-neutral. Second, the fact that early Christians had their eucharistic meal in the houses of wealthier members provided more opportunities for women's involvement in preparing, offering, and serving bread.⁵⁴⁹ Third, when the bread that they ate commemorated the death of the martyrs (as well as the death of their master), the presence of substantial number of female martyrs might have shaken the gender barrier.

Burton Mack understands religion as a social structure that works to meet social interest. For him, myths create a place on a narrative-level for social formation; therefore, "mythmaking and social formation go together."⁵⁵⁰ In other words, myths that provide better social logic for social formation can dominate over other myths. The imperial cult and other religious elements in the Roman era failed to provide such logic

548. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), 61. Also see Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*, 59-61; Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 297. They also confirm women's exclusion in the process of sacrifice in the Roman era.

549. L. Michael White, *Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, The ASOR Library of Biblical and Near Eastern Archaeology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 19.

550. Mack, *Christian Myth*, 70.

whereas Christians at least "dared to cultivate a social vision of human community" through their mythmaking processes.⁵⁵¹ Before long, Christian myths, which were produced and re-produced in their eucharistic meals, prevailed in the Roman Empire. Bread was a more suitable food than meat for the new Christian myths and social formation that went together.

The remaining question would be how Christians managed collectively for such a long time not to eat meat that was *haute cuisine* in the era. What was the value system or worldview that held Christians from eating meat? One answer would be found in the idea of *contemptus mundi* (contempt for the world). After surveying *contemptus mundi* as a literary expression and as a world view in late antiquity, Vincent L. Wimbush concludes:

Contemptus mundi should not, therefore, be identified as anything simple. It was not mere "otherworldliness." It was not escapism and powerlessness, passivity and victimization, or the idealization of such. It was, instead, a coming into power through an alternate orientation, negation, oppositional speech, a language of critique, one of the "arts of resistance." . . . The rejection of world was not an end in itself, but part of a move to gain perspective for a new prioritization of all that "world" represented.⁵⁵²

Having *contemptus mundi* as their worldview, it was not just meat that Christians rejected, but also identification with the dominant world and all the worldly pleasures

551. Ibid., 125.

552. Vincent L. Wimbush, "*Contemptus Mundi--Redux* : The Politics of an Ancient Rhetorics and Worldview," in *Power, Powerlessness, and the Divine: New Inquiries in Bible and Theology*, ed. Cynthia L. Rigby (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1980), 275.

that were symbolized in meat. In this sense, bread for Christians was a rhetorical weapon that gave an "alternate orientation" to the world.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have drawn attention to various ways in which sacred meals have acted as boundary makers for identity in particular Jewish and Christian communities. Beginning with the insight of Mary Douglas, I have shown that sacred meals have significant implications for who is included in the community of God's people. Given the nature of the evidence considered, I have moved from more literary texts that are less historically reliable to texts that point more to actual historical events, although these two cannot be taken completely at face value. Although I initially set out only to explore a set of distinct case studies, there is a theme that emerges when we consider all of these cases together. That theme is one of moving from a more inclusive community to a more and more narrowly defined community that excludes people through consumption of the sacred meal.

After setting out the methodology and discussing the relevant literature in Chapter 1, I showed how meals functioned to define people's relationship to God in Gen 2-3 and then how this relationship is redefined in the story of Abraham in Chapter 18. In the story of Adam and Eve we saw how God's hospitality allowed for an open and inclusive relationship between God and people. It was Adam and Eve's transgression of God's prohibition against eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil that redefined that relationship and separated people from God. The focus of this chapter was on the meal

that Abraham and Sarah served God in Gen 18. In this instance, there was a reversal in terms of hospitality and consumption with Abraham and Sarah providing a fine meal for their divine guests who are the only ones to eat. This meal marks the beginning of God keeping his promise to Abraham and Sarah, given in Gen 12, and also begins the restoration of humanity's relationship with God.

In Chapter 3, I proposed a different structure for understanding Exod 19-40, one that recognizes the importance of the meal described in Exod 24:1-11 in establishing a close relationship between God and his chosen people. Here, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 elders eat a meal in the presence of God. This meal occurs at a critical moment in the establishment of God's covenant with Israel. Significantly, it also marks a change in location of God in relation to the Israelites as God leaves Mt. Sinai and joins the Israelites in their progression through the wilderness in the tent of meeting. This meal, I suggested, presages the Eucharist and establishes a close, personal relationship between God and his people.

With Chapter 4, I moved to the first Christian example of a sacred meal that redefines the relationship between God and his people. I suggested that the feeding of the 5000 in Mark 6:32-44 should be understood as a sort of *symposium*. As with any *symposium*, the feeding of the 5000 also reflects particular social dynamics, though in this case different than we would expect. Jesus' open commensality meant those who were included in the meal were the people with low status who had typically been excluded from God's people. Those with the most power, Jesus and his disciples, act as

the dining room slaves, serving the food and thus inverting the hierarchy we would expect. This first example of a Christian meal represents a reestablishment of God's people in open, inclusive terms.

Next, I looked at the epistle to the Galatians and 1 Corinthians to show how Paul struggled to maintain the kind of open commensality that was present in Jesus' ministry. As we saw, Paul struggled to maintain this openness in the face of challenges from both Jews (in Antioch and Galatia) and Gentiles (in Corinth). The traditional means by which meals kept groups (Jews and Gentiles, male and female, slave and free) separate threatened the inclusive nature of the early church. Here we get our first glimpse of how meals might be a means to excluding certain people from church community. We also see how Paul attempted to maintain the ideals of Jesus in addressing these problems and in providing theological vocabulary and justification to support these ideals.

In Chapter 6, I showed how the Eucharistic meal came to be a tool in shaping a unified Christian church through exclusion and segregation. I explained how the different eucharistic theologies of the Gnostic and 'orthodox' churches provided distinct understandings of the nature of the divine-human interaction in the Eucharist. Only the 'orthodox' saw the Eucharist as truly offering communion with God. It was Ignatius who employed the power of the Eucharist for purposes of combating heresy, however. Ignatius was the first advocate of the monarchical episcopacy and he believed that the bishop could control who was within God's community through his control of the Eucharist. As the primary ritual of the early church, the meal thus became its primary

means for excluding those who held different beliefs or practices.

Last, I looked at how the Eucharistic meal helped build other borders between Christians and non-Christians within the context of Roman persecutions of the Christians. Specifically, I argued that the Eucharist came to be described in the language of sacrifice and was thus connected to the death of Jesus and the Christian martyrs. I showed how Ignatius and Cyprian both linked the Eucharist to sacrifice and how this rhetoric helped to build boundaries between Christians and their Roman persecutors. Not only did this work on the interpretive level, but also in terms of the sociology of eating since the Christian rejection of sacrificial meat worked to segregate them further from their surrounding community.

The case studies I have presented here show the same trend occurring in the Hebraic and Christian traditions. Beginning with the feeding of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, meals establish a relationship between God and his people that incorporates, at least symbolically, everyone. This relationship then becomes more and more narrowly defined, first to Abraham and his descendents and then even more specifically to the Israelites under Moses's leadership. The pattern repeats in the Christian texts I have examined. First, Jesus and the disciples provide an open *symposium* style meal that includes all kinds of people. Their openness to people of low social status demonstrates the incorporation of everyone into being a part of God's people. This egalitarianism did not last long, however, and the church soon came to use meals not as a form of inclusion, but of exclusion. The meals thus once again became a

means to narrow down the community of God's chosen people by excluding non-Christians and even Christians who shared different beliefs. Although this is not a simple unified or linear progression that can easily be written as a history of exclusion in the church, it does point to significant issues worth considering when we think of the importance of meals in establishing an open and inclusive community.

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